

Gc
929.2
M93964
2062207

M. L.

REYNOLDS HISTORICAL
GENEALOGY COLLECTION

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 1833 01418 9416

IN OTHER DAYS

A Golden Age Remembered

by

Ruth Murdoch Lampson

with a foreword

by

Caroline Fenn

1961

PRESS OF THE TIMES

OBERLIN, OHIO

075

79 10383 5

IN OTHER DAYS

A Golden Age Remembered

by

Ruth Murdoch Lampson

with a foreword

by

Caroline Fenn

THE STATE ARCHIVES
OF
OHIO

1961

PRESS OF THE TIMES

CLEVELAND, OHIO

072

79 10383 5

2062207

COPYRIGHT 1961

by the

PRESS OF THE TIMES

OBERLIN, OHIO

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Recd Nov 1 - 1979

2055507

COPYRIGHT 1961
by the
PRESS OF THE TIMES
OBERLIN, OHIO

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PC 81-1366-1

This book
is lovingly dedicated by the author
to her grandchildren
TIMOTHY CARL and LAURA JANE
LAMPSON

Look thy last on all things lovely,
Every hour — let no night
Seal thy sense in deathly slumber
Till to delight
Thou hast paid thy utmost blessing;
Since that all things thou wouldst praise
Beauty took from those who loved them
In other days.

WALTER DE LA MARE

CONTENTS

Foreword	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
The Three Black Murdochs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
Sixty South Broadway	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
An Evening at Home	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37
Dancing and Deportment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42
Les Girls	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
"Doc"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	58
The Farm	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	72
The Golden Summer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	77
Sheila's Story	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	88
Christmas Long Ago	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	97
A Dream	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	106

Foreword

The pattern in color on these pages is taken from a motif in the wrought iron gates made by Samuel Yellin for the corridors of the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College where the author served many student generations as a teacher of English literature.

Foreword

My own experience of these stories is one of utter contentment. On winter afternoons Ruth Lampson would settle me comfortably in front of a substantial tea, in her snug living room and read one of them aloud to me. I knew they were not really for me, that she had written them at her son's request to give him and his children a picture of her girlhood, before the turn of the century, so different from his boyhood before the Second World War. But as she read, stopping occasionally to laugh or to add a pungent comment, I slipped easily into those other days more spacious than our own. I began to recall forgotten sights and smells and other delights of my own youth.

It seems to me impossible that anyone can read them without being led straight back to early pains and pleasures half buried in memory. This is why, I suppose, I enjoy so much her feeling for the living room at Sixty South Broadway (the one I grew up in had a cannel coal fire too); for the smells of Grandfather Murdoch's barn (I too appreciate new mown hay and

In Other Days

horse manure); for his woodlot which was “down the lane and way beyond. It was a sightly place” (our woodlot was *up* the lane, and rather *unsightly*, but it was a woodlot and we did have picnics in it).

These deceptively simple stories are arranged in approximate chronological order, from little girlhood to young ladyhood. The first story gives us the Scottish forebears who served with The Bruce. It's a rattling good tale, one that any grandfather would delight in telling, one that any grandchild would delight in hearing — and perhaps Grandfather Murdoch rests in even greater peace now that it is dedicated to the grandchildren of his appreciative granddaughter “Ruthie.”

The Scottish flavor stays with us through the next few stories in the person of Jeanie — she was quite a person — the hired girl who had an amiably brutal way of speaking her mind. The author can be sentimental now, if she chooses, but any fancifulness uttered in front of Jeanie would have withered away at once.

I am grateful to have met the Murdoch clan, especially the author's parents, and to see some of their spirit repeated in her. It is impossible to choose a favorite one from among these tales, but I like especially Doc and Sheila's Story for their portrait of Doctor Murdoch. He had strength and steadiness and the wide-

ranging freedom of a well-disciplined mind — he had in fact the things our age is striving to get, and the curious beauty that attends them.

The collection ends with three stories about Christmas: Sheila's Story, from the period just before *The Golden Summer*, one from the author's childhood, and one from her mature years when she was teaching English Literature to the Navy's V-12 Unit (her own son was at the time on active duty with the Navy during World War II).

It is gratifying to me to see these stories in print, though they are meant to be read aloud, I'm sure, preferably in front of a cannel coal fire. For those of us whose senses, like mine, are too frequently sealed "in deathly slumber," it is delightful to be given these invigorating recollections, to be caught up by the zestfulness of a person who looks her *first*, as well as her last, "on all things lovely, every hour."

CAROLINE FENN

The Three Black Murdochs

It is a summer night, late in June, in the front yard of an old gray farm-house in Trumbull County. The grass grows heavy, tall pine trees overlook the house, a maple or two grow wide-spreading, and an old gnarled apple tree has wandered in from the orchard, its low branches perfect for children to climb. Just south of the house is a brook edged with willows and blackberry bushes. If you listen you can hear its soft murmur as background music. It is moonlight — full moon. A spice bush and an old-fashioned thousand-leaf rose shake their sweetness into the air.

In a low chair sits the grandmother in her gray poplin dress, her sheer muslin kerchief crosses her breasts, its ends tucked beneath her belt. She wears a cap of the same sheer muslin, for never since her wedding fifty years before has she been seen with uncovered hair. Assorted uncles, aunts and parents are scattered about on the grass. Some of the children are in the low crotch of the apple tree, close to the doorstep where the

In Other Days

patriarch of the clan sits, an old man, but sturdy and erect as a boy, his ruddy face crowned with a halo of white hair, his blue eyes, piercing yet kind, surveying his flock. An austere man, of great dignity, and greatly loved.

A child's voice says, "Tell us a story, Grandfather;" a grown-up echoes, "Yes, do, Father. This is just the night for an old tale." Another child says, "Please tell the one about the black Murdochs."

"Weel noo," Grandfather says to the children, "if I tell you the story wull ye be guid bairns and gang awa to bed when your mithers call?" "Oh yes! Yes!" the children cry.

My grandfather was a graduate of the University of Glasgow, remained a good Greek student to the end of his days on an Ohio farm, and spoke impeccable and beautiful English. But when he told an old tale or talked to us children, he used the Scots vernacular. So he begins the story of how there came to be black Murdochs, of how three of them served under Bruce and of how the sept Murdoch of the clan MacPherson won its right to a crest.

"A long, long time ago," my grandfather began, "was the first Gavin Murdoch head of the sept Murdoch of the clan MacPherson. He was a braw and gallant lad, well-skilled in a' the manly airts, tall and strong and soople, red-headed wi' eyes as

The Three Black Murdochs

blue as a Scottish loch. Weel, as fate would hae it, he fell in love with Agnes Bethune of the clan MacDonald" . . . and here I take up the tale, for the vernacular now escapes me.

The MacPhersons and the MacDonalds were ancient enemies, and no bitterer feuds were ever known than those between Scottish clans. They were marauding, lawless, reckless men who loved to raid and harry, to lift their enemies' cattle, to maim and kill. For a man to fall in love with a lass from a warring clan was an invitation to sudden death. Her father and brothers would seek a swift and sure reprisal, and, if like young Loch-invar, he had carried her away on his saddle bow, the morn's morn would see father and brother in hot pursuit and the ensuing fight would be long and bitter, as hate grew by what it fed on. Peace was never made between warring clans until there was none left to fight.

How in that remote place and time Gavin Murdoch and Agnes Bethune ever came together, I cannot even guess. Did they perhaps have the Highland Games, where all the clans gathered to show off their prowess and to compete for honors at broadsword and claymore, at putting the shot or riding the ring? Did Agnes, from a seat on the hillside, see braw Gavin ride forth, and fall in love with his red hair and blue eyes? Agnes was the nut-brown maid of the old ballads, dark eyes and

of the old and new world, and the great changes that have
taken place in the world, and the great changes that have

been made in the world, and the great changes that have

been made in the world, and the great changes that have

been made in the world, and the great changes that have

been made in the world, and the great changes that have

been made in the world, and the great changes that have

been made in the world, and the great changes that have

been made in the world, and the great changes that have

been made in the world, and the great changes that have

been made in the world, and the great changes that have

been made in the world, and the great changes that have

hair. Did Gavin, looking up, see that dark head and fall in love? No one knows, but Love laughs at locksmiths, so they say, and fall in love they did. This part of the story never interested my grandfather. All he ever said was, "Gavin carried Agnes awa' slung o'er his saddle bow and fetched her haim, and she was bonny and guid and made Gavin a guid wife." So, some way, some day, Gavin fetched Agnes "haim."

Haim would be a bleak gray stone house set on a mountain side, the mountain rising sheer behind it and dropping away again in front, down to Loch Tay far below. A dour, grim place, more fortress than house, as all the Highland halls were. Built four-square, a squat round tower at each corner, with narrow slits in the thick wall letting in the only light and air. On the ground floor would be one room, the central hall, with kitchen and offices at the rear. Bare stone floors, bare stone walls, for there would be no rugs on the floor nor hangings on the walls; at one end was an immense fireplace with wooden settle projecting, a massive oak table down the center of the room with benches each side where family and clansmen ate, doubtless with their fingers, throwing the bones to the waiting dogs. Above, there would be sleeping rooms and the women's quarters, where Agnes and her maids spun and wove and made the clothing for the household. And there in guid time Agnes

was brought to bed of twin boys, Gavin and Keith, the first black Murdochs, for though like their father in stature and boldness, they were like their mother in color. A year later the third black Murdoch, Kenneth, was born.

These were years of peace, for strangely the MacDonalds had not sought vengeance, or even to regain Agnes. It was almost as though she had died and been forgotten. Though no MacPherson believed but sooner or later the day of reprisal would come. During these years Agnes' power of second sight seemed to leave her — a power she shared with others of the Bethunes, for they were dreamers, they saw visions, they foretold the future, there were even bards among them. Usually the second sight foretold danger or great adventure or loss; with Agnes it had shown her Gavin long before she saw him in the flesh, and her elopement had been foreseen long before it occurred.

So, two, three, four, five, almost six years went by and still the MacDonalds delayed. Then there came a day when Gavin and every able bodied man of the sept was away on a foray, leaving only a handful of young boys and the auld piper to protect the women and children — the piper, too old to pipe his clan into battle, good now only to play the family to the table and tell the bairns tall tales of ancient battles and glories

long past. This day the children and the piper were on the forecourt of the hall — a wide, stone, paved place in front of the hall, surrounded by a wall, breast high, hemming the place in before the cliff dropped sheer to the Loch below. The auld piper dozed in the sun, the bairns played at skittles, the women upstairs were busy spinning and gossiping. Then the spinning and the talking ceased; Agnes seemed to stiffen in a kind of trance as she stood by her spinning wheel; she called out, "My bairns, my bairns." Frightened and trembling, the women followed her headlong down to the forecourt. There were no bairns there. The auld piper lay beside his pipes, his white hair bluidy and his head crushed by some tremendous blow. The women wailed and keened, but Agnes stood silent, staring at the dead old man and the empty court. Then she called out in almost a shout, — "The bairns are awa, but they are nae deid. Nae harm has come to them and I ken where they're gone. Cease your noise. There's nae need for wailing." And they stopped, "for didna the mistress hae the second sight and surely she spoke the truth."

When Gavin and the men returned, they would have set forth on the instant for the MacDonald lair, purged them from the earth, lock, stock and barrel. But Agnes forced them to listen.

The Three Black Murdochs

Like the women, they too believed in the second sight. If Agnes had seen the children safe, then they were safe. She told them that she knew where the bairns were, why they had been taken and how they must be rescued. They were safe, she said, for seven days. On a mountain meadow, not too far away, was a pasture for MacDonald cattle; in the pasture was a stone hut, a But and Ben such as herdsmen used for shelter. There the boys were with two guards, and there they would stay for a sennight. No other MacDonald would come near the pasture lest by so doing he betray the presence of the boys. The MacDonalds hoped that Gavin and his clansmen would think the boys had been taken to the MacDonald home place, so they would expect a foray from the MacPhersons at once, and in the melee ensuing they would expect to kill Gavin and the Murdochs till none were left. But if Gavin did not rise to this bait, on the seventh day a messenger bearing a white flag would come across the loch. He would propose, with fair words and a black heart, the exchange of Agnes for the boys, saying they did but want their own. If Gavin should believe them and yield Agnes, they would kill her without scruple, and with the treachery of the times and their own black hearts would then slay the boys. "But," said Agnes, "you can bide five days; they will think you feared to meet them. On the fifth night ye maun

In Other Days

gae wi' picked men to yon mountain meadow by a secret way I'll tell ye, set upon the guards, kill them and fetch the boys safe haim."

So, in the heavy darkness, under the lowering Highland sky, on the fifth night, picked men, all the best of the sept, angry and determined on vengeance and rescue, set out. They were all experienced deer stalkers; now they were stalking other game. Quietly, in single file, by devious paths, sometimes up sheer cliffs, they made their way to that fatal mountain meadow. The sleeping guards were dead before they knew the enemy was upon them. In the grey dawn three small boys were carried back to their mother.

The next two days, waiting for the fulfillment of Agnes' vision, must have been strange ones. They must have prepared the hall for a foray or a siege, or perhaps made ready themselves to attack. Possibly some skeptic among them questioned; was nae sae sure aboot the second sight. At ony gait on the seventh morn a little boat moved across the loch; as it neared the cliff a messenger stood up holding a white flag. He and two others landed and climbed to the forecourt. When they were well into the center, Agnes appeared at the great doorway, her three boys standing in front, and she cried out, "Here are the bairns. Come and tak them if you dare." And while Agnes and the children

The Three Black Murdochs

looked on, Gavin and his men slew the messengers. "A grand woman, that," my grandfather would say at this point.

Of course the MacDonalds sought revenge, and swiftly. They attacked in force, but were driven back, and were then so harried, had so many cattle taken, so many men killed that never again did they seek to attack the Murdochs who lived in such peace as the times permitted.

The years passed quietly after this vengeful episode. The boys grew up, like their father skilled in a' the manly airts, but especially were they known as archers. In all the countryside there were no bowmen as good as the three black Murdochs. The twins were now seventeen and Kenneth sixteen. One day, not long after Kenneth's birthday, Agnes once more experienced the trance and the vision. In the vision she saw three black ravens flying low in formation, one above two; she saw three arrows pierce the ravens simultaneously, but she saw no archers. She called the boys to her and told them the dream meant that they were to go to the camp of Robert Bruce and ask him to take them on as archers. Then, she said, the dream somehow would be fulfilled.

So Keith and Gavin and Kenneth set out. Over hill and dale, moor and fen, by loch and burn they journeyed until they reached the camp. There they asked humbly to be accepted as

In Other Days

bowmen. The Bruce looked at them and said, "Ye're ower young to be amang my bowmen. My men are seasoned wood. Ye are but green. Go haim and come again when ye're seasoned." At that moment three black ravens appeared, flying low in formation, one above two; three arrows left three bows; three ravens fell dead at the feet of Bruce. He looked at the sky, at the dead ravens and at the boys. He smiled his slow grave smile and said, "Ye'll nae need to gae haim. The wood is well-seasoned. Ye maun bide."

And the three black Murdochs, Gavin and Keith and Kenneth, became archers for Bruce; they fought at the battle of Bannockburn, when the Scots brought low proud Edward's power. And after the battle Bruce himself knighted Gavin for valor and the Murdoch sept of Clan MacPherson won the right to the crest — three black ravens flying in formation one above two, pierced by three arrows.

Sixty South Broadway

Houses, like people, have personalities. Some old houses welcome you with the warmth of years of living and loving. Such a house says, "Come in, be happy, for this house was made for happiness." Sixty South Broadway reached out its welcoming arms to all who came to it.

Neither stick nor stone remains of it. A public garage has swallowed up house and wide lawn. But there isn't an uneven floor-board, a squeak in the stairs, a picture on the walls, that isn't alive in my mind, that isn't indeed "writ on my heart."

I wake sometimes from a dream in which I am a child again in my little old room, with its too big window seat and my doll's house. I suffer a terrifying moment of panic, for I do not know where I am, or even who I am. Lost between two worlds, I can return to neither. I am driven to say out loud, "This is Thirty-nine North Cedar, not Sixty South Broadway. I am not a little girl, but an old woman. The voice I heard calling has been stilled these fifty years." Only then can I find my way back into the present, far less real for the moment than the past.

In Other Days

For, though the house is gone, the home is part of me and will perish only when I do.

The house stood close to the sidewalk, facing west, with a wide curb-lawn between the sidewalk and the unpaved street. Maples and catalpas alternated down the curb-lawn and on summer evenings the scent of the catalpas was sometimes overpowering. At the side and back were wide lawns. The back yard ran a full block to the next street, Summit, and when I was a child, a big barn stood at the Summit end, housing the two horses, buggies, cats, and even a part-time "hired man."

It was a house of doors, three at the front and five more side and back. The front double-door, with its iron grill over red and green stained glass, stood open all summer and was never locked. A second door off the porch, put in after my father bought the house, opened into my father's front office. He had bought the house, partly, because the one time double parlors converted so easily into offices for a doctor.

The front office contained two works of art — one a large steel engraving of Landseer's *Stag at Bay*; with its wide, heavy, gilt frame it covered most of the north wall. I thought it wonderful; it was so real! On the table by the door stood the *pièce de résistance*, a Rogers group. A Rogers group consisted of sculptured figures, telling an obvious story, famous for their

painstaking detail and for their life-likeness. No middle class family with the slightest cultural pretensions was without one, usually standing on a table by a window so that no one could miss it. This one was called *The Invalid*: a lady, in a peignoir hemmed with elaborate embroidery, languished on a sofa while a benevolent gentleman with a Vandyke felt her pulse as he looked at his watch. Everyone admired the embroidery and marvelled at the perfection of the doctor's beard.

The back office was used for private consultation but the rest of the house spilled over into it, so that the shelves covering one wall and designed originally for medical books gradually held books from Grimm's *Fairy Tales* to Macaulay's *History of England*; the *Morte d'Arthur* jostled Gray's *Anatomy* and the *Fairie Queen* rested beside a standard work on obstetrics.

In the evening when my father didn't need the room, I entertained my beaux there; it would never have occurred to my mother to relinquish the living-room to me, nor did I expect her to. That was her domain; I was free to share it with her, but never to take over from her.

That back office had one feature that, I hope, was unique; in one corner, from the floor to and through the ceiling ran a bare, black furnace pipe. The hot air furnace had been installed long after the house was built and, for some fantastic

In Other Days

reason, the heat from the furnace was carried directly to an upstairs register by this unprotected pipe. We kept our house very hot, and I have seen that pipe incandescent, heat waves shimmering about it. Why we did not burn up is a mystery, for not only was that pipe a danger, but in the adjoining living-room a cannel coal fire sputtered and crackled all day and part of the night with no fire screen.

Sometimes I think of that gracious living-room — with its fireplace between the two windows in the bay, its soft terra cotta walls, the rather shabby oriental rug, books and magazines everywhere — as the heart of the house. Pictures covered the walls, for it was a day when etchings and copies of the Old Masters were held to be essential to the good life. It was the era, also, of the easel on which was placed the most important picture or the newest acquisition. Ours was not, in any sense, a religious household and yet the easel pictures I remember best all had religious connotations. One was the head of St. Paul; one was an Ecce Homo, the head of Christ with its crown of thorns; a third, St. Cecilia by Carlo Dolci, in a lovely oval walnut frame. I look at it now and the charm of the old house is mine again. But I wondered then, and I wonder now, why my mother felt that sad head with its crown of thorns suitable to, or pleasing in, our living-room.

No sooner do I say the living-room was the heart of that house than I begin to wonder. Was it? What about the dining-room, or the kitchen? For this was a hospitable house where the unexpected guest was always expected. The table was always set with one or two extra places and it was a rare day when they were not filled.

The dining-room floor had settled a little and sloped gently to the narrow back porch upon which yet another door opened. I remember the room most fondly when the paper was a Wedgewood blue picked out in heavy gold leaf. No pictures in this room, for a cherry plate-rail ran around the room midway between the ceiling and the cherry wainscoting. Here my mother displayed her choicest plates — the blue Canton china and the hand-painted ones, presents from friends who "painted china." Some of the floral designs were charming, some awful, but all fashionable. "Painting china" was one of the things permissible for a lady to do. Beneath the rail ran a row of hooks from which hung specially valued cups. The cherry table, hand-made by my grandfather Jones, was usually open to capacity though we were only three. I think of that room as always full of people. We lived half way between uptown and downtown and it was a natural thing to drop off there and stay for supper. My mother loved to entertain and was always bringing people home

In Other Days

from church or club or gathering a few friends together, and I brought anyone home at any time with no more than "Lydia is going to stay for supper, Mama, and I guess Jess is coming."

Each year the county medical association met in Akron and my mother always gave a dinner for the members. They were a rather stuffy crowd who talked shop all through my mother's excellent roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. One year they found, over the dining-room door, a pasteboard sign with big gilt letters: "All ye who enter here, leave pills behind" and at each place was a list of penalties for introducing even one pill into the conversation. My mother had her reward in a really gay party.

But mostly I see that table at supper time in the winter, with its white cloth and big damask napkins, a steaming coffee-pot by my mother and, at my father's place, the big stoneware soup tureen. The gaslight flickers softly, a small fire in the English grate burns low lest the room get too hot, and about the table are gathered dear and familiar friends who laugh and talk as we make away with my mother's wonderful food. (I smell johnny-cake and her famous onion and potato soup!)

My first conscious memory centers in the dining-room, though it has nothing to do with food or friends. I must have been no more than four, for it was in the time before the

furnace. A small shivering girl stands on a white sheet spread in front of the grate; back of her is a big screen shutting off the rest of room; in front of her is a tin tub, presumably full of warm water; beside her stands her mother holding a big bath towel and laughing as she urges the child to get into the tub. A tentative foot exploring finds everything to her satisfaction and she gets in and splashes wildly. Then someone takes away the tub and sheet and screen; she is rubbed dry in the big towel, tucked into her flannel nightgown and — clean, warm and happy — rocked to sleep to her mother's voice repeating lovely poetry.

There is one more memory of the before-the-furnace day. This occurs upstairs in the big front bedroom. I must have been recovering from some childish illness and put to bed in that room because there was a Franklin stove there and none in mine. I lie watching the fire, loving its warm glow and feeling utterly content . . . and then I notice the shadows made by the fire-light. I begin to follow their outlines, on and on; they waver and almost disappear, but not quite. Where do they go? I wonder. How far? And if I tried to follow, could I? And where would I go? Placid content gives way to fright and I call for my mother who comes and comforts me, but even she cannot tell me where the shadows go.

In Other Days

There is one more fire-light memory. This time I am lying on the white bearskin rug before the living-room fireplace. It is dusk and the lights have not yet been turned on, so that I am reading by the light of the fire. I am almost completely lost in that incomparable tale, *Under the Lilacs*. I hear, however, my father's voice in an adjoining room speaking to my mother: "I think we better not tell her tonight. She'll only cry herself to sleep." I jump up and run to him saying, "No, you tell me now." He looks at my mother, who nods. My father holds me close as he says, "Darling, Louisa Alcott died this morning." I burst into sobs and cannot be comforted and I do indeed cry myself to sleep. I've lost my first friend, experienced my first grief; I have met Death.

So, by flickering, wayward fire-light, I've learned cleanliness and comfort, been caught in wonder and mystery too big for me, and met finality.

Perhaps the most important room in the house was the kitchen, which opened by a heavy swing-door into the dining-room. By any contemporary standards that kitchen was thoroughly bad. There were, of course, no modern appliances; kitchenware was strictly utilitarian and usually ugly and heavy to handle. It was a big room, inadequately lighted. One high window above the sink opened almost against the wall of the

Sixty South Broadway

Windsor Hotel, one other window opened on the narrow passage between the hotel wall and our house, one door with a half window opened on the back porch, and there was one flickering gas light. Painted green with yellow trim, it had wide bare floor-boards scrubbed almost white, a big combination gas and coal range — the “black devil” my mother called it — needing endless polishing with stove blacking to keep it decent, wooden kitchen cupboards, built-in flour bin, two corner shelves by the door, the lower for a pail of cistern water, the upper for well water with a tin dipper hanging beside it. These, with a cast-iron sink, a big white pine table, two or three kitchen chairs and a Boston rocker, made up a kitchen like every other one of the period, except that this one was a little more gay and cheerful than most of them.

It was for me, as such kitchens were for children everywhere, the center of a great deal of my life. On Saturday afternoons I loved to come in from play, sniffing as I came the elegant smells from the kitchen. There the table was covered with a white cloth and on it were the loaves of bread, brown and white, rolls, the sugar cookies my father loved, a pie or two, the Sunday morning küchen, the Saturday night doughnuts and — almost best of all — the smell of the beans baking in the oven, rich with great slices of salt pork and smothered,

In Other Days

not in store molasses, but in maple syrup from grandfather's sugar bush.

My mother was often away in the afternoon and then I moved myself and my dolls into the kitchen, sometimes coaxing the "girl" to let me help, but more often getting in her way and chattering like a small magpie. My mother had a way with her girls, and they usually left us only to marry and with regret on both sides. The hired girl was an essential figure in the household economy of the period. Her weekly wage was about what a cleaning woman makes now in four hours. She "lived in," was usually given Thursday afternoon and evening off, and Sunday afternoon — between dinner dishes and Sunday supper. In our house our girls had Saturday evening also and were free Sunday after the dinner dishes were done, and they could entertain their beaux one evening a week in the kitchen. My mother was sharply criticized for spoiling them, but the system worked well for us and for the girls.

Some of the very pleasant memories of my childhood center around two of those girls: Jeanie, straight from Scotland, and pretty Irish Kitty Thym.

Jeanie was a forthright, uncompromising, stubborn Scot. She must have been with us in the late eighties, for 1887 was Queen Victoria's golden jubilee, and I remember pouring over

copies of the *London Illustrated News*, spread out on the kitchen table and full of pictures of Queen Victoria, the procession, the scenes in the streets and in the Abbey. I looked at them as pictures almost from a fairy book, and said, "Oh, I wish I could be a queen and ride in a golden coach." Jeanie replied, "It's a vain ambition ye have; ye'll do well to be a guid bairn. Stop fashing aboot golden coaches and set the table for supper."

My mother prided herself on beautiful and unusual deserts. A cherry tapioca pudding made of sweet black cherries with lots of nuts was a specialty of the house. A great mound of whipped cream, tinted a faint pink, topped the beautiful dish. Once, when the doctors were there for dinner, Jeanie brought in a sad-looking dessert — no piles of rosy cream; just a dismal, damp, pale topping. She planked it down by my mother, saying, "I tell't you that cream wouldn'a whup, and you can see it didna whup." She once commented on a steamed blueberry pudding: "Weel, it may be guid, but it's nae bonny." She disapproved of all American ways, thought I was badly spoiled, and talked endlessly about going "haim." But she met a brisk young chap who courted her in our kitchen with many a smacking kiss, married him, and we knew her no more.

But the queen of our kitchen and our hearts was Kitty Thym. She was utterly lovely — gray eyes with dark lashes,

light color, curly brown hair, a lilt in her walk, a song on her lips. She was the delight of the house, and when she married I was inconsolable.

We had a tornado in Akron while Kitty was with us. It cut a wide swatch down Exchange Street, south and west of us. My father was on his accustomed rounds and my mother out making calls when the storm broke. Kitty shut up the house, told Beatrice McCue, who was playing dolls with me, to get into the big leather patent-rocker with me, while she went upstairs for a blessed candle which she lighted. Then she knelt in front of the chair, arms around both of us, and prayed to her own St. Catherine, to St. Beatrice (for Bea was a Catholic child) and for me, of course, to the blessed Virgin Mother whose love encompassed all children. And that was Kitty Thym.

Even the old barn at the end of the back yard had its delights for a child. It housed Lady Grey and Roland, the buggies, assorted cats and, in a little box of a room off the hay mow, a college boy earning his living by taking care of the horses and doing the yard work. As the only barn on the street, it was the scene of endless fun — jumping from the hay mow, walking the rafters, hide and seek or, on rainy days, just story-telling and munching apples in the fragrant hay. When an ordinance decreed that all barns within the city limits must be torn down,

I was desolated. Once, when my mother and father were away, I was staying with Aunt Flod and Uncle Clayt Smith — relatives by courtesy. I woke them one night screaming, "I want to go home, I want to go home." And the only reason I could produce: "I don't like your barn. I want to go where my barn is."

The back yard had a haphazard garden — nasturtiums, sweet peas, heliotrope, mignonette; two old gnarled pear trees had a hammock hung between them; there was a cistern on the back porch and a well by the fence. The water from that well tasted faintly of iron and to this day all other drinking water is flat to my taste.

2062207

Summer time was porch time. Small town people lived all summer long on their front porches. If you walked along the street after dark, you would hear voices and laughter, ice tinkling in the lemonade pitcher, and catch now and again the glimmer of a good cigar with its pleasant aroma. Neighbors gathered, friends dropped in, big palm leaf fans moved the hot air lightly with at least an illusion of coolness, and the pleasant interchange of small town-small talk blended with the creaking of rockers and the swaying of hammocks.

At our house the front front porch belonged to the grown-ups; the side front porch, opening off the living-room, was mine. A wide, fringed hammock and cushions piled high made up

RUSSELL

In Other Days

its furnishings. On the summer evenings when we were not picnicing at Turkeyfoot, canoeing at Long, or dancing at Silver Lake, we were on someone's front porch, usually ours. There was always one boy with a mandolin, always one girl with a pleasant voice to start the singing. We talked a lot, all at once — idly, I must suppose. We certainly concerned ourselves with no world problems; we thought very little of things outside our shining circle; we lived for the hour, happily and gracefully. The stars came out, the moon shone down upon us; there was a little innocent arm-about-the-shoulders and a hasty kiss in the shadows, and then my mother at the door saying, "Boys, it's after ten" — even the grown-ups had gone by now. So with "see you tomorrow," laughter, and the echo of music, another summer evening passed into the heart's cherishing.

From front porch to back porch; from cellar stored with vegetables, apples, jams, jellies, pickles, canned fruit, and maple syrup by the gallon, to the attic with its piles of hickory nuts and black walnuts, and trunks full of marvelous "dressing-up" clothes for a small girl and her friends, Sixty South Broadway was a lived-in house — a house we loved and that returned that love; that sheltered us; welcomed us, come good or ill; consoled us in sorrow; and, at last when we left it, gave up its ghost and was no more, save as it lives in my heart.

An Evening at Home

This might be any evening at home; it might be a composite of many. The time is turn-of-the-century, the place a long low-ceilinged living-room in an old house in an Ohio town. There is a bay window at the south — odd because it has but two windows, for the customary central window has given way to a fireplace with thistle tiles brought from Scotland, where all day long a fire of cannel coal crackles and splutters — the heart of the room, the heart of the home. On the floor in front of it is an ugly, thick, white bear-skin rug which my mother despises but cannot throw away because it was the gift of a grateful, but not very intelligent, patient of my father's. For this is a doctor's house; not only is it the doctor's house but his office. Turn-of-the-century oculists and dentists usually had their offices "down-town," but not doctors. Only one doctor in our town had a "down-town" office — not, gossip said, because he wanted it, but because his wife felt she could not have patients

In Other Days

coming to her house. "They are some of them so common, my dear," she said to my mother. Our rambling old house had been chosen because the double-parlors with a separate outside door converted so easily into front and back offices, the latter giving directly upon the living room. There were four such house-office combinations in our block alone.

The life of the house centered about my father — "There is no guid aboot the hoose when the guid-man's awa." My mother often quoted that Scotch proverb. And for us it is true. The life of the house quickens and even the fire burns brighter when the guid man is hame. So, when evening comes we hope, often vainly, that the telephones will not ring. At this time our town had two rival telephone companies and of course a house-office like ours had both. When one wasn't ringing, the other was.

In the middle of the room a big walnut table, its center made of heavy green felt, holds piles of books, the latest *Atlantic* and *Harper's*, a work-basket running over, a brass student lamp, two burners with green shades attached by a long green tube to the gas fixture above. My mother, her small compact body fitting neatly into the small compact black rocker with the cane seat, "Mama's chair," is busy with her embroidery. Perhaps she is working on the nasturtium tablecloth with its heavily fringed edges. She had drawn the pattern in the summer from

her garden, matching the colors so exactly that the flowers seem to bloom upon the linen; perhaps she is busy with the Shakespeare set — the tablecloth with a center wreath of flowers from the plays, each napkin carrying a quotation — “Let good digestion wait on appetite,” “Sweets to the sweet.” Whichever it is, the pattern takes shape under her swift, deft fingers. Now and then she holds it away from her as if passing judgment on her work, beautiful enough to be a museum piece.

My cousin Helen, who sometimes lives with us, has curled up on the bear-skin rug, head toward the fire like a little salamander. The two tiger kittens race up and down the room, stopping now and then to coax Helen to play with them, but she’s much too comfortable to move, and they go back to their scampering.

The curtains are drawn at the windows, the night is shut out, my father is home. The room with its soft terracotta walls, the deep blue of the Victorian settee, the muted colors of the old rug, the flickering firelight, the glow of the lamp make a haven, safe, secure, for the small girl who sits on a low hassock by her father’s chair, resting her head on his knee. He is reading out loud, the light shines directly on the high, wide forehead, the faded blue eyes, so wise and tender. To the small girl it is the most beautiful face in the world.

In Other Days

There is a moment's pause in the reading as her mother adjusts the lamp so that the light may fall more directly upon the page and then the rich full voice goes on. What is he reading? It might be one of the Plays — never spoken of as Shakespeare's, for to my father there are really no other plays, so *The Plays* — perhaps *A Winter's Tale*; it might be that most beloved poet to a Scot, Robert Burns; or perhaps Sir Walter's Jeanie Deans makes her plea for her sister's life to Queen Anne right there in our living room. But I think tonight it is the *Tale of Two Cities*, for he loved it above all novels, as he loved Dickens above all novelists. When someone recommended a new novel to him he reread one of Dickens', on the ground that there couldn't be anything better. So, tonight he has reached the scene — the last one in that noble tale — the room in the prison where the condemned are waiting the call to the guillotine and Carton spends the last minutes comforting the frightened girl at his side. I look up; my father's voice is broken a little and he gets up, putting the book on the table, as he makes some excuse about hearing a noise in the front office. There is no noise, we well know, but he has reached the page that he cannot read out loud and man-like he retreats from too much emotion. Helen, who at the beginning of the reading has come to sit on the other side of my father, takes the book and reads

An Evening at Home

for a few minutes — her voice chokes and she hands the book to me. I try to read but soon falter and stop. My mother puts aside her embroidery, picks up the book and reads steadily on to the end. My father has come back into the room and stands listening. Helen and I are in unashamed tears and even my intrepid mother's voice trembles a little as she reads, "It is a far far better thing I do than I have ever done before; it is a far far better rest I go to than I have ever known before." For us listening to her, and to her, too, I suspect our warm and friendly room has faded away and we are in the bleak prison with the drunkard and the wastrel who yet knew that to lay down his life for his friend was both the best and the easiest thing he had ever done.

Well, it is all gone now. Not one foundation stone of that house remains. It lives only in my heart, complete and immortal — Home. Sentimental? Yes, I think so. Romantic illusion? Yes, perhaps. If so, I am grateful beyond words that my childhood was nurtured on such sentiment and such illusion.

Dancing and Deportment

Time 1890

A small freckle-faced, red-headed girl sat on top of a stone pillar at the bottom of the steps running from the house to the sidewalk. Why the post was there, what it was for, no one knew. Perhaps when South Broadway was still country it had been one of two pillars at the entrance to a driveway. Now it was useless except as a base of operations for the child, who could swing herself up and sit cross-legged on its broad top from which she could keep an eye on the whole block, and yell such comments on passers-by as came to her. The pillar was a bone of contention between the girl and her mother who thought it distinctly unladylike for a ten year old to climb, to show her legs or to yell at people passing.

It was a Saturday, and she longed to spend the afternoon in the backyard gym of the Allens down the street. She could see the boys and two girls going into the yard. Her heart was

bitter, for this was dancing-school afternoon and she knew no matter how hard she prayed (and she had great faith in prayer), God seemed to be on the side of her mother and sooner or later she would be snatched from her perch, bathed, dressed in a dreadful "best" dress, her hair curled, her feet shoved into patent leather slippers. Worst of all she would be made to wear silk stockings knitted by her mother, stockings so fragile and precious that they were first rolled and then unrolled up her skinny legs. If she fell on the dance floor, as she was quite likely to do, her first thought would be, "Oh! Oh! I hope I didn't tear my stockings!" How she hated it all! Why did she have to learn Dancing and Deportment at Mr. Stickles' select Academy for Young Ladies and Gentlemen? "I'll Stickles him," she said vengefully. That winter her father had been reading *Bleak House* out loud, and both fell into calling Mr. Stickles "Mr. Turveydrop." That made her mother cross and she said the child's father humored her far too much and didn't care whether she grew up to be a lady or not. "No more do I," he'd said, "so long as she grows up a healthy, happy woman." But, if her mother said she was to go to dancing school, she'd go. It was even worse than Sunday School and that was bad enough, but at least there she didn't have to curtsy and point her toe and wait for some boy to ask her to dance. They never did until Mr.

In Other Days

Stickles made them and then like as not that boy would stick his tongue out at her or trip her. Just then her mother called, "Come in, Ruth." She crawled down from the pillar and as slowly as possible went into the house.

The woman who was once that child smiles a little over the tempest in a teapot. She looks back and knows her mother was right; she needed all the dancing and deportment she could be taught and later she was to be grateful for those Saturday afternoons. She knows, too, how pretty those clothes were that she hated so. Her mother had exquisite taste and an expert needle and all the child's clothes were lovely. This particular one was pongee silk imported from China. The round neck was finished with small petal-like pieces embroidered in intricate designs in golden brown; around the hem of her soft gathered skirt another row of petals fluttered as she moved and a wide brown satin sash with an enormous bow in the back held firm her thin little waist. Her hair — oh! dear! Not many weeks before she had grown so mad at the heavy braids and her hair combed straight back from her forehead and held with a round comb, that she had taken her mother's shears and cut uneven bangs and lopped off her braids. Her mother cried when she saw the havoc and rushed her off to the barber who evened up the bangs and did what he could with the rest. Now

Dancing and Deportment

it had grown a little and by putting it up on rags a slight curl could be achieved. A band of ribbon the color of the sash held the unruly locks in place.

The child could swing upside down from a trapeze, beat any boy on the block running, ride her father's horses and give a good account of herself with her fists if need be. But! Dancing and deportment! She was at an awkward stage, all knobs and angles. She knew she wasn't pretty and it made her cross to be all dressed up as if she were. As a matter of fact she was rather nice looking, her hair was good, her blue eyes honest and clear, her skin fair and delicate — even with freckles — she was sturdy and staunch, a sonsy lass. But she'd heard too often, "Beauty is as Beauty does," "Beauty is only skin deep." "No, you are not as pretty as Lois, but it's much better to be good and clever."

Scrubbed, brushed and curled, she and her mother, resplendent in a wine-colored suit trimmed with jet passamenterie, set forth at three o'clock for the Dancing Academy on South Howard just before it merges into Main; then up steep and not too clean stairs into a cold little ante-room where anxious mothers hover over a crowd of chattering girls, all except herself apparently happy to be there. Her hair was re-brushed, slippers taken from the slipper-bag and urged upon

...and the ...

...the ...

...the ...

...the ...

her reluctant feet by her mother, her impedimenta arranged, and she was ready for the fray.

Every little girl carried a bonbon box, suspended on a slender chain with a ring at the end which slipped over her thumb. The box was a little smaller than a compact, but thicker, and held a quantity of highly flavored candies about the size of the pills in her father's medicine case. She was supposed to offer bonbons to her partner but as she usually ate them all herself she was often remiss in the proper social behavior. A fan, a necessary part of her equipment, made of small brown ostrich feathers, tightly curled, hung from a ribbon around her waist. Part of the instruction in Deportment was in the method of wielding a fan.

So assembled and accoutered, behold her as she enters the ballroom, accompanied by her mother who makes her way to the far end of the room to join the other mothers who, over their knitting or their needle-point, are anxiously watching their offspring. First she curtsies to Mrs. Stickles, bows to Mr. Stickles and speaks politely; then she crosses the room and sits down in a row of little girls, all with bonbon boxes and fans. There she is supposed to sit with her ankles crossed, never, never the knees, God forbid; she may use her fan, offer a bonbon to the little girl in the next chair and converse quietly and politely.

Soon Mr. Stickles gives the word for the Grand March; all the little girls get up and curtsy to the little boys across the room who bow in return and walk across to choose their partners. After the Grand March comes a two-step, Mrs. Stickles, Junior, at the piano, Mr. Stickles, Junior, and Mr. and Mrs. Stickles each partnering a child. All return to their places and there is a brief lecture by Mr. Stickles, illustrated by Mrs. Stickles, on grace and ease in the ballroom. Serious business begins now as Mr. and Mrs. Stickles demonstrate the new dance to be learned, a schottische, and then lead each child out in an attempt to make small, uncertain feet follow their deft and flying steps. After this perhaps a waltz quadrille.

One day the child had as her partner her special dislike, Guy Conger, whose newly-rich family had built a hideous stone castle on the bluff back of the Lewis Miller estate. There was armor in the hall, garish stained glass windows and a pipe organ no one could play. It was Mrs. Conger who had said to the child's father, speaking of people who had not called on her in her mansion, "Well, Doc, I'm just as good as anyone and a darn sight better than most, bigosh, and that's the kind of a hairpin I am." Guy was as big a ninny as his mother and he and the child hated each other. This day he tripped her, or she tripped; anyway she fell flat on her face on the dance floor,

In Other Days

dragging him down with her. Whereupon he rose, kicked her and walked off. Everyone tittered, Mr. Stickles gave a little lecture on ladylike behavior, she burst into angry tears, and ran for her mother's protecting arms.

But not all Saturday afternoons were like this. Sometimes when it rained and she couldn't play outdoors anyway and her restless small self demanded activity, it was even dimly pleasant to go to dancing-school. Sometimes she even liked her dress, sometimes she danced very well, for she had a strong sense of rhythm and if there were plenty of polkas she was in her element — "heel and toe and away we go" — with skirts whirling and patent leather toes twinkling through the lively steps. On these days she received no censure from Mr. Stickles and felt no disapproval from her mother.

After dancing school she and her mother often went to the book store for the new *Harper's* and then across Howard Street to the *A and P* to watch the manager dip from big red and gold bins the fragrant coffee beans and then grind just the exact proportion of Mocha and Java to her mother's order. She was too young to drink coffee but she could carry the bag, sniffing delightedly all the way home. The aroma of freshly-ground coffee and *Harper's* are inextricably woven together to this day in her mind.

Dancing and Deportment

But the best of all was coming home — her father's big hug, the sense that somehow today she had merited and won the approval of the grown-ups. (She often felt she merited approval but all too seldom received it.) Out of the dancing-school clothes into her warm flannel robe and soft slippers, stretched out by the fire, twinkling toes still for the moment, she basked equally in the warmth of the fire and a sense of her own virtue, the day almost over and no mishaps!

All those polite little girls, their slippers and fans, their bonbons and their curls; their sprightly feet trip in 1-2-3 glide, 1-2-3 turn, across my memory. Nothing remains, but to this day when I cross my knees I sometimes hear a ghostly whisper, as though Mrs. Stickles from some heavenly dancing floor was speaking — "A lady never shows her — ah — limbs. Please cross your feet at the ankles. So, there, that is better," as I guiltily slip back into the proper position for a lady.

Les Girls

We tend to invest our childhood, indeed all our growing-up, with a kind of innocence. I doubt if there is any truth in the investiture; that the children of one generation are more sweetly innocent than the children of any other seems unlikely. The pretty picture of little white lambs gambolling on flowery fields must go by the board; there are usually a few black ones here and there.

The manners of my generation, however, if not our morals, were distinctly better than the manners of today. We were trained in Deportment with a capital D, how to sit, how to walk, how to converse, how to behave at table; we were taught deference to our elders, consideration to those who served us, a graceful courtesy to one another. It seems to me that the descent into bad manners accelerated in the nineteen-twenties; that was the time the "lost generation" began to be lost. A kind of "we are little black sheep who have lost our way" and "to hell

with it all" became the tone of society. The "better classes" began to ape gutter manners as they rubbed shoulders with the underworld in fashionable speak-easies. Those manners have grown more gutterish as the years have passed, so I give my generation points on manners. We did observe a certain decorum; our social relations had a charm I find missing now — a charm of good breeding which we thought important. "Lady-like" was not then a term of contempt, and a boy might be a "gentleman" without being ostracized.

As to morals? We were certainly less flagrant in our misbehavior; we recognized a code if we didn't always live up to it. We were protected, too, by a few accepted rules for behavior which, on the whole, we did not rebel against. For rebelling too wildly meant being dropped and dropped quickly from our pleasant social world.

The girls I knew best — Abby Standish, Bess Carpenter, Jess Barr, and my closest friend Lydia — were, with one exception, girls of impeccable behavior. Abby, Bess and Lydia were as virtuous as the "Little Women" — good girls in every nice, old-fashioned sense of the word. Jess, it is true, had the soul of a tart, if she had a soul. She was the most beautiful human being I ever knew; I have seen but one other more beautiful, and that was Maxine Eliot. I never had any illusions

In Other Days

about Jess, but I worshipped at her shrine. Beauty always seemed a gift of the gods before which one burned incense. Her body was perfection, her face utterly lovely, exquisite coloring, beautifully modeled, great dark eyes — blank it is true, but beautiful. And she had the most charming manners! Our mothers were always saying, “Why can’t you have as pretty manners as Jessie has?”

She set out to make a good match and made it. She was the first one of us to marry. She captured a Princeton chap who had come in the first wave from the Ivy League colleges to work in the big and growing rubber industries. Her mother staged a spectacular wedding. Lydia was maid of honor, and coming down the stairs caught her high heel in her train, catapulted down, narrowly missing the bride!

Jess was so tipsy that night, as was her groom, that unwittingly she conceived. She did her best to rid herself of the incubus but missed. She left her new husband to his own resources and came home to her mother for her entire pregnancy. She was more beautiful than ever and might have posed for a radiant, ethereally lovely madonna.

Lydia and I were both working and we spent all our spare money on lovely things for Jess, and as much time as we could steal from our jobs to amuse her. We shopped for her, ran er-

rands for her, read to her, played games with her and laughed at ourselves for being such ninnies, for we knew well enough what Jess really was. But we knew also how helpless we were in the kind of enchantment she could create. We were happy slaves to her whims.

She had an easy time when the baby came — the prettiest and dearest little girl, looking exactly like Jess. I never saw her after 1905, but I shall always think of her as the loveliest creature I ever knew, Undine who never attained her soul.

Abby was a beauty, too. Perhaps handsome is the better word for her. All her family were stunning and she the most striking of them all. At the turn of the century the Standishes were the richest people in town, though later they lost most of their money and fell on bad times. They were our only aristocrats — truly solid old Mayflower New England. They always seemed exiles in Ohio. The girls were sent east to Miss Finch's school; no one west of the Hudson was usually admitted but the Standish girls were. Then a year in either Paris or Geneva at another school and a six-month grand tour with a governess-companion. After that they came out in Cleveland, at a ball, and in Akron at a reception followed by a dance. They were the only girls in Akron in my day who had debuts. The rest of us went away to school or college, came home, our mothers

included our names on their "at home" cards and that was all there was to it.

I admired Abby — handsome, poised, beautifully bred — always gentle, with a sweet dignity. One never trespassed there, never felt really close to her, but we all admired her and were happy when she liked us. She had beautiful hands — long, slim, tapered fingers. They always looked cool and elegant. For some reason Abby was almost the last of us to marry, perhaps because she never practised the usual feminine wiles.

Bess was plain, so plain that she was homely. She was also extremely popular — a cynic might say she was also extremely rich. Her family, the Carpenters, were among the earliest of the new rubber-rich. Mr. Carpenter, up from the shops by way of a brilliant invention of a new process, provided the money for Mrs. Carpenter's determined assault on such society as the town offered. They built what for that day was a mansion on Union Street and finished off the third floor as a ballroom. There Bess gave quite marvelous parties, orchestra buffet suppers, favors. Not to be asked to the Carpenter parties meant one was consigned to the outer darkness of being nobody.

Bess owned the first brass bedstead Lydia and I had ever seen. How we longed to replace our somewhat chipped enamel

beds with ones like Bess's. She was a thoroughly decent person, a good, loyal friend. She and I were the first girls in our generation to go to college; I, to Middlebury and she, the year after, to Smith. (She came up to Midd for my commencement; everyone liked her and she had such a good time she almost lamented that she had not come to Midd. But Smith was just the place for her.)

She married the boy across the street. The wedding was big and gay — a rainbow wedding in the Congregational Church on High Street. Bessie did look plain in all her finery, surrounded by pretty girls. I'm sure she was quite unconscious of it; she had some quality that always carried her through. Poor dear, she died young, and her only daughter died while still in college. All of them are long since gone, but her name still brings pleasant memories in its train.

And Lydia. Lydia was Lydia. In a way she was the center of our tight little group. She was the inventive one, she could always think of something to do to inject life into a dying party, always without self-consciousness and always having a wonderful time herself. "Let's go," Lydia said — and we went.

I loved her from the day she came to our house, aged five, to take me, two months her junior, to kindergarten across the

187

...and the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...

...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...

...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...

In Other Days

street in the old Universalist Church basement. She was even then taller than I; she took my hand and led me across Broadway, got my apple from my coat pocket, put it on a radiator to warm until recess time, introduced me to Fraulein Schumaker. "Tante Anna, this is Ruthie. She's new, she'll be good." Then turning to me she said, "You'll be all right now." And this was the pattern of all our long, long years of friendship.

When we were grown women and went to Cleveland to shop I always put my pocketbook in her bag, knowing she would curb my extravagance. The only time I failed to do this I had both bag and pocketbook stolen.

One summer I was studying at Columbia and living in a flat with two other girls. Lydia's husband, Parke, was working for his doctorate at Heidelberg, but she came back to the States in July for a Kappa Kappa Gamma meeting — I think she was Grand President. At any rate she arrived at the flat, took off her hat, unpacked her bag and said, "What needs mending?" and "I better wash your hair this evening." And she mended and washed and put me in order before she took off again.

When my father died she and Parke moved into our house. Parke took over all the responsibilities I could not face alone. It was Lydia who searched the florists' shops until she found a little bunch of the lilies-of-the-valley my father had so loved,

and it was she who put them into his cold hand. And it was Lydia's arm around me and Lydia's voice saying, "You'll be all right" that saw me through those dark days.

Bess has been gone this long time; where Jess and Abby are, or if they are, I do not know. But Lydia, darling Lydia, is still here. The sky will darken for me when she departs. I wish I could capture her in words. I can say honesty, lack of pretense, practical ability, innumerable skills from cooking to painting, ruthlessness with sloppy doing or thinking or being, unlimited capacity for giving love, loyalty, gaiety, vitality — all the lovely words, but Lydia is not there. She escapes my net, no matter how skillfully I throw it. The best I can do is "Lydia is Lydia" — God be thanked.

So here they are — four girls from very long ago, living again in my heart and I hope for a moment on this page.

"Doc"

Gavin Murdoch came to America sometime in 1842 with his wife, Agnes Howatt, his sons, Hugh, four, James, two, and William, six months. No one of them had ever been ten miles outside the parish of Auclinlech save Gavin, who had gone to the University at Glasgow and there taken a good degree. On many a Scotch farm, one son was set apart for the church and endless sacrifices were made to send him to the University. Gavin's experience could not have been very different from that of young Tom Carlyle from the neighboring parish of Ecclefechan. Walking most of the way, perhaps getting a lift in a carrier's cart, carrying a flitch of bacon and a bag of oatmeal, living in wretched lodgings, but learning, learning. For learning, to Gavin, was the one necessity.

In due time he came before the board of examining elders of the Scottish National Church, but instead of quietly answering questions, he insisted on asking one: would they please

explain the doctrine of infant damnation which he neither understood nor accepted. Of course that bold questioning of ancient authority ended Gavin's chances of a kirk forever.

He went back to the farm where for several generations Murdochs had been tenants of the Dukes of Argyle. He married, children were born; they were never baptized, to their mother's deep sorrow, for how could Gavin submit them to the rite saving them from Hell when he did not believe the doctrine which consigned them there?

Work was hard, for Scottish farms are not too fertile; life was bare for them and their neighbors. But for them there were always books — a very few, well-thumbed and re-read and understood and loved. Those books came to America in the old chest, to be read and re-read by at least two generations.

After a few years the old Duke of Argyle died. His relationship with his tenants had had something of the old feudal clan sense of responsibility, and they in their turn had respected him and abided by his judgments. He was succeeded by a young man who would have none of his father's "old-fashioned" ideas. He was hard on his tenants, harsh in his treatment; when a general election came along he ordered them to vote for a certain candidate. Gavin did not take to coercion, refused to vote as ordered, and was dispossessed.

In Other Days

With neither farm nor kirk, Scotland held no future for him. He packed his few belongings, gathered up his family and set out for America. The voyage, by sail, took some weeks; they landed in New York without much money and with William ill. They came West by the Erie Canal and then overland to Gustavus in Trumbull County. Soon so many kin followed them that the Post Office was called Scotland.

Among the few very precious belongings they brought with them were my Grandmother's wedding china and her beautiful homespun, hand-woven table and bed linens. Most precious, however, was the chest of books. In the big kitchen-dining-living-room at the farm they held the place of honor in Grandfather's combination desk and book shelves. Only a few, but those the best — all of Shakespeare, very fine print in two columns with steel engravings, all of Scot, and all of Burns. Beside the desk to the right stood a small table, on it the big family Bible, beside it Grandfather's Greek Testament. Week-days, the evening reading was from the Bible; Sunday mornings my grandfather read from his Greek Testament, rolling out the phrases and their translation for us. To the left of the desk was Webster's Unabridged Dictionary on its tripod. When any of us asked a question of Grandfather, his answer was "Gang awa to the big book and find oot for yersel." If we still

failed to understand, he would answer our question, but not until we had tried to "find oot for ousel" — so the love of learning was passed on to us all.

William Murdoch, aged six months on arrival in Gustavus, was my father. He used to insist he remembered the arrival, but I'm afraid no one believed him. Sometime in his childhood he had suffered brain fever, a form of meningitis, which left him with a shrunken left ankle and an inability to put that foot normally on the ground. In his earlier years he used crutches, but when I knew him he had graduated to a cane. The quick, uneven step, the tapping of the cane on the walk, were the sounds I listened for at the end of the day.

I assume that he couldn't have done much of the heavier work about the farm because of his lameness. Perhaps this set him apart from his more robust brothers and sent him early to books as a sure refuge. He was an omnivorous reader, in his later years preferring to re-read the old tried and true books to trying out new ones. The first purchase he ever made was of books. When he was about ten his father gave each of the children a little money to spend when the pedlar made his summer rounds. My father bought *The Life of Blennerhasset* and *Sickness and Health in Bleeburn* with his money.

In Other Days

He must have gone to country school, but of higher education in the academic sense he had none. Sometime, somewhere he taught himself Latin and had a fair smattering of it and the most intense respect for it as the backbone of a proper education. He started me off with a tutor and a beginning grammar when I was nine.

Presumably, by the country standards of his day, he was educated, for he began teaching country school at the age of eighteen. Eventually he became the first superintendent of the Garrettsville schools. There he met Clarissa Abigail Jones, teaching first grade, and married her. Clarissa had in her class a pretty, black-eyed child, Elizabeth Ashald, who later married Jeffrey Lampson. In later years the daughter of Will and Clara married the son of Jeff and Libby, and now writes this narrative.

My father had done some study in medicine before he married. He had "read" with a Dr. Partridge in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and had been his more or less apprentice-assistant. The training of a doctor, till quite late in the nineteenth century, was not too different from the training in the eighteenth. The prospective doctor "read" with a practising physician, made up the sugar-coated pills, measured out the quinine, took a few office calls and answered the night calls unless it was something very serious. He learned largely by observation and by a kind of

trial and error method. By the early seventies a doctor must have, in addition to this hit or miss training, a diploma from an accredited medical school. After his marriage my father completed his studies at the old Cleveland School of Medicine and set up practise in Akron.

In spite of what seems a shocking lack of training, many a doctor of the day had an amazingly low mortality rate; they knew and loved, and were loved by, their patients as I think no modern physician is. What a doctor like my father did not know about his people was not worth knowing. He was confessor and absolver of sins that even sometimes the priest did not know. I used to think that my father and Father Tom, to distinguish him from his older brother, Father Mahar, knew almost as much as God did about "their" people. There was a tolerance, a loving-kindness, an understanding — not only of the ill body, but of the sick soul — in men like my father. They deserved the name of Healer.

He was slight of build, in his later years very thin and frail, with the left shoulder a little lower than the right. I thought him handsome and his youthful pictures bear me out. His hair was auburn, and when he was young he wore it rather long. When I knew him it was no longer fashionable for a man to have long hair and his was cut short, but no cutting subdued

In Other Days

the wave in it. His eyes were blue, pale but penetrating, gentle, a little wistful and often puzzled; like Mr. Tulliver, he found life "puzzlin'." He wore a carefully trimmed Vandyke and a neat little mustache. I used to think he looked like the bust of Shakespeare on the living-room mantle. But I remember with the greatest pleasure his hands — long, slim, delicate fingers, made to create or to comfort and cure.

I think of him as infinitely gentle, long-suffering, patient, accepting life on its own terms and making the best of it — a loving and giving person. He never made demands, he hated suffering, he despised meanness and cruelty, he had no sense of caste or color, made no distinction in his treatment of people. He taught me to fear and hate all artificial barriers among men. He found forgiveness in his heart for all sinners, but never for sins of meanness or cruelty. Once when we were driving away from a house in which a woman lay dying of cancer, my father said, "I can scarcely endure to see the suffering she is bearing; I wish I had the courage to give her the overdose of morphine she begs for." Another time, when I was rude to a clerk in a store who had been a little slow in getting hair ribbons of the right color, he looked grieved but said nothing till we were out of the store and then only, "A lady is known by the way she treats those who serve her."

He joined the Universalist Church — in revolt against the Calvinism of his youth — for the Universalist denies the existence of Hell and, since my father refused to believe in a Deity who would permit Hell, he and the Universalists got along very well together, although he seldom went to church. He was not given to doctrines or creeds; he lived the good life and let others make the formulas for it.

His practise was wide and varied, town and country. There was no hospital nearer than Cleveland. Babies were born where they were conceived, and a doctor was lucky to have a good practical nurse on hand or even an old-fashioned midwife. After my father's death I destroyed box after box of photographs of his babies, many of the boys named William after "Doc." I destroyed almost as many boxes of unpaid bills, for he was a poor collector; often he never sent out a bill, feeling sure that people would pay him when they could, and now and then they did!

I think I spent more time with him than most daughters do with their fathers because he liked a companion on his daily rounds and I loved going with him. As a small girl I took my dolls and played house happily while he made his calls; later, a book took the place of the dolls.

Sometimes, when sickness in the house was mild, I'd be

In Other Days

asked to come in. It was fun to be invited into the Irish homes in South Akron — not very tidy or clean, but with the warmest welcome for “Doc’s guurl.” We drank black “tay” as strong as lye, and I got enough Irish blarney to turn a stronger head than mine. Even better were the homes of the German millers at the other side of town. Mr. Shumacher of the big flour mills had brought over from Bavaria a small number of highly skilled millers. Their houses were immaculate, always plants in the windows, and such food! Breads whose names I didn’t even know — küchen, tiny fancy cakes, marzipan — and then German chocolates, heavy, sweet, and covered with whipped cream! No wonder I hoped Mrs. Guth or Mrs. Braun would come to the door and call, “Kommst du herein, liebchen.”

Our hours together were good, full of talk about books and people, about my problems, little or big, about life in general. My father never treated me like a child, always as an intelligent being. Once when I was quite young, an ill-advised Sunday School teacher had tried to impress the idea of Eternity upon minds much too young to sustain its weight. The whole business scared me out of my wits; I had nightmares about it and finally appealed to my father. His answer was, “I don’t understand it either, but somehow, sometime we’ll work it out together.” That ended my being afraid of the word “eternity” or

any other word, for that matter. If we could "work it out together" it couldn't be too bad.

Perhaps my memories are especially tender because he was the one person in my entire life who thought me perfect just as I was. Quite literally, he would not have altered a hair on my head. He was wrong, of course, but it's pleasant to know that once someone did feel that way about me. He was sure, too, that nothing in the world could be too good for me. One summer, when we were about to leave for Lake George, my mother asked him to take me to the milliners, there to buy me a "nice" white hat. We returned with a monstrous leghorn, trimmed with three tightly curled ostrich plumes, tying under the chin with broad satin ribbons. My mother took one look at the horror and said, "Will, why on earth did you buy that *Thing*?" My father answered reasonably, "Well, it was the best hat in the store and the most expensive." Both amused and cross at my father's folly, my mother took me by one hand, the hat box in the other, and marched me back to Mrs. Jacob's, where we bought a neat, white straw with a blue band and a plain blue streamer. I hated it.

Long years later at my college commencement, the head of the History Department said, "Well doctor, we were glad to have Ruth for a little New England polish." My father an-

... and the ... of the ...

The ... of the ...

... and the ... of the ...

In Other Days

swered, quite indignantly, "She doesn't need any polish, New England or otherwise. I like her just as she is."

Loving, patient, tolerant and wise, he gave endlessly to all who asked of him. He gave until there no more to give, and in the end he gave his life.

Christmas of 1909 was a day of wet, heavy snow just on the edge of becoming rain, but not making it. We had only two guests, friends of mine who had recently lost their mother. We hoped the telephone wouldn't ring, but it did, about three. "Would the doctor please come right away to see Mrs. Davis? She seemed worse." Mrs. Davis had pneumonia and it was still the day when the ultimate battle was between the heart and the disease. If the heart could carry on, the patient recovered. All too often the heart wore out and the painful end came. My father knew what "she seemed worse" meant, and was off at once. The Davis family lived on High Street, a block south and not too far to walk. He must have been soaking wet when he arrived. Mrs. Davis was still conscious, knew him and said, "You'll stay with me, won't you?" as she reached for his hand. He sat there through the hours of her dying, the grasp of his hand, I must believe, easing her in the hard process. And when at last she died there was much to be done for the family, reluctant to let him go.

When he came home in the early evening, he was wet to the knees, shivering, and his face gray with fatigue. My mother got him into his warm robe and slippers; I brought him a bowl of hot soup from the kettle that simmered on the back of the stove for just such emergencies. After a little he relaxed and said he felt all right, but was tired and would go to bed.

He coughed a little the next morning, but made his accustomed rounds, as he did the next day. The third day the cough was worse; he decided to stay at home and was glad to rest in bed. We asked our neighbor, Dr. Foltz, to come in; he looked grave and said we better get a nurse. Then for the first time we were seriously alarmed.

And so the few days passed until New Year's Eve. I had been sitting just outside his room, waiting to relieve the nurse, when she came to the door and said, "I think Dr. Foltz better come." Our telephone was out of order and I ran down the street — in bathrobe and slippers, through the cold slush — for the doctor, who scolded me sharply for being such a fool.

When he came into the room, he looked at my father and then nodded gravely to the nurse. Not until then had I realized he was dying. It never occurred to me that he could die. He would simply refuse to die, I thought, as long as I needed him.

In Other Days

With the selfishness that was always mine with him, I reached across the bed, pulled him up against me and said, "You can't die. I won't let you. You have to stay here with me." And he died in my arms.

My strong and resolute mother somehow seemed to disintegrate and it was for me to take over. I remember chiefly how cold, how bitter cold, it was and how frozen inside and out I was. I seemed to move in an icy void, doing somehow the right things at the right time. Aunts and Uncles came; Parke and Lydia moved in, Parke taking over the most difficult arrangements for me. The body lay in the back office for two days, and all day and into the night, people passed by to look their last at "Doc." I stood by the door into the living-room to speak to them, for most of them knew "Doc's girl," and they comforted me a little, and I them. All day the comments echoed, "I don't know how we'll ever get along now" . . . "He saved my Jim's life" . . . "I'll never dare to have another baby without Doc" . . . "O! but he was a good man."

Nothing could better say what manner of man he was than that stream of people — Father Mahar of St. Vincent de Paul, Mr. Monroe of the First Congregational Church, some girls from "Ma" Enhart's House on North Main, old men, children, black, white — all lamenting "What will we do without him."

The day of the funeral was bitter, bitter cold. Lydia and I kissed him once more as he lay there, so peaceful now, with Lydia's lilies-of-the-valley in his hand, and then the coffin closed on my father.

I wish there were new and shining words to say what he was, not just the old, tarnished ones. He died as he lived, loving and giving — freely and gladly. Perhaps he'd like it best if I said only

William Murdoch, M.D.

1842 - 1910

The Farm

When I was a little girl, long before the sixteen-going-on-seventeen era, the great event of the summer was the annual visit to the Farm. I anticipated it anxiously and eagerly, hoping my mother would let me stay longer than the allotted two weeks and knowing that she wouldn't. The other grandchildren stayed all summer, but my mother had strong views about imposing on the grandparents and two weeks was my limit.

There were two ways of reaching the farm, one quite disagreeable but quicker, the other longer but delightful. Even the so-called "quick" trip was long and horrid. We took a queer old-time train on a narrow gauge railway. We changed trains at, I think, Orwell — anyway a most unpleasant off-beat station with a restaurant serving dismal food in an atmosphere of heat, dirt and flies. My mother refused to go that way; my father and I seldom undertook it, but when we did I arrived in Gustavus tired, hot, dirty and cross.

When my mother was along we took the Erie to Warren and there hired a surrey to take us the rest of the way. I loved

rolling along the road, sitting on the front seat between Uncle Hugh and my father. I'd lean out and jump up and down to catch the first glimpse of the row of maples that told us we were nearing the farm. (My father would pull me back, saying, "O Ruthie, do keep still!") My grandfather had planted a double row of maples a mile each way from the farm to give shade to the occasional passer by.

And then, suddenly, we were making the left turn into the drive — really just a rutted wagon-track — leading to the house, far back from the road. The sprawling front yard with its big trees — oak, elm and willow, with low branches into which we children climbed; the straggling, unpruned bushes — lilac, mock-orange, wild rose; the long tangled grass — there it was, not a leaf changed from last summer.

There too was the house, low and weather beaten to that perfect silvery gray you sometimes see on Cape Cod, and on the narrow side porch my grandmother awaited us. I remember her best in a gray poplin dress with her white kerchief across her bosom held in place at the waist by the belt of her spotless, voluminous white apron. She wore a white cap with fluted ruffles; on Sundays she added a lavender ribbon. She greeted me always with "And how is the wee bairn the day?" She never kissed any of us, seldom put her arms about us, but her smile,

which seemed to me very odd as given that it might be
 in fact that the great fact that the world was not
 more or less the same as it was in the past and will be
 in the future that the world is not the same as it was
 in the past and will be in the future that the world is not
 the same as it was in the past and will be in the future
 that the world is not the same as it was in the past and
 will be in the future that the world is not the same as it
 was in the past and will be in the future that the world is
 not the same as it was in the past and will be in the future

and that the world is not the same as it was in the past
 and will be in the future that the world is not the same
 as it was in the past and will be in the future that the
 world is not the same as it was in the past and will be
 in the future that the world is not the same as it was in
 the past and will be in the future that the world is not
 the same as it was in the past and will be in the future
 that the world is not the same as it was in the past and
 will be in the future that the world is not the same as it
 was in the past and will be in the future that the world is
 not the same as it was in the past and will be in the future

that the world is not the same as it was in the past and
 will be in the future that the world is not the same as it
 was in the past and will be in the future that the world is
 not the same as it was in the past and will be in the future
 that the world is not the same as it was in the past and
 will be in the future that the world is not the same as it
 was in the past and will be in the future that the world is
 not the same as it was in the past and will be in the future
 that the world is not the same as it was in the past and
 will be in the future that the world is not the same as it
 was in the past and will be in the future that the world is
 not the same as it was in the past and will be in the future
 that the world is not the same as it was in the past and
 will be in the future that the world is not the same as it
 was in the past and will be in the future that the world is
 not the same as it was in the past and will be in the future

In Other Days

the firm clasp of her hand, her lovely, low, warm voice made us aware of how much she loved us and welcomed us home.

As soon as I had greeted her I ran out into the drive again to give a quick look and make sure that nothing had changed. There, across from the porch, were the two huge pine trees — big, black, sky-reaching; between them the swing where we pumped up and up, flying dizzy but triumphant until we seemed to touch the clouds. Then a glance back — yes, it was just as I had left it — the barn, the lane, the orchard, and beyond sight would be the woodlot where my father and I would gather moss and checkerberries for my mother.

Now I can go back into the house, content, to greet my Aunt Margaret and my cousins Keith and Helen who always spent their whole summer at the farm. Supper's on the table — perhaps salt pork fried until it is crisp and tender as bacon, new potatoes, new peas, gravy made of Jersey cream, bowls of fruit, cookies, and milk for everyone to drink.

As soon as we had eaten and Grandfather had read the evening prayer, I changed my dress, begged my mother to let me go barefoot, lost out, and tore off to the barn. Milking was long since over, but the sweet-breathing placid Jerseys were there to turn big inquiring eyes on the child who talked to each one, remembering their names. If I got to the barn before milk-

ing, I loved to squat on the floor while Grandfather sent a steady, thin, warm stream straight from the udder into my waiting mouth. The Jerseys attended to, I could call on the three big work horses, look at the hens, watch the swallows on the eaves, and rub the ears of the wise old Collie, Maida, who took charge of the children as well as the cows. Barn of endless delights, from cows to temperamental hens, who laid their eggs in the most unlikely places, to the rafters and the haymow. Keith and Helen climbed the rafters, but I was scared to. Rainy afternoons we took our books and maple sugar from the kist to the haymow and there read and munched and talked and pummeled one another in that aimless play children love.

Even the smells were good! Hay, the strong aroma of manure, the smell and taste of maple sugar all mingled with the smell coming through the open barn door from the barnyard soaking in the rain.

Just outside the barn was the pig pen. I loved to scratch the old sow's back and hear her grunt in ecstasy. When she had just had a litter, it was well to keep away, for she was ugly then and had been known to eat her own piglets.

Behind the barn lay the orchard, not sprayed nor much cared for, but growing apples enough for us all and to spare. The cool room in our cellar in Akron always smelt of Greenings

In Other Days

and Spies and Jonathons, kept fresh all winter. There were a few sweet apple trees yielding fruit sweet and mellow as honey that we children ate on the spot.

Down the lane and way beyond was the woodlot. It was a sightly place. Grandfather cut only for household use and never sold his timber. As he cut carefully and thriftily, the wood kept much of its beauty through the years. It is almost entirely associated, for me, with my father. It was usually late afternoon when, hand in hand, we would go down the lane. My father walked slowly, because of his lameness, and I ran and hopped and skipped and pivoted around him, always hanging on to his hand. In the wood we looked for the moss and checkerberries and tiny white parasites, *Indian Pipes*, from which my mother would make, in shallow bowls, entrancing landscapes. When my basket was full, we would sit down by a tree, my father would light a cigar, and we would settle the affairs of the world.

Then, my basket running over, as the sun was westering we went back hand in hand down the lane, through the orchard, stopping to scratch the pigs, looking in the barn a minute at the milkers, and on to the house and supper.

Those were moments frozen in time — in an eternal Now — that nothing can displace or destroy.

The Golden Summer

The summer of 1898 was memorable for two events, the Spanish-American War and my approaching seventeenth birthday. To be sixteen-going-on-seventeen in those golden days was sheer enchantment. The young girl, still in her pig-tails, became a young lady almost over night. Down went the skirts to ankle length, off went the childish ferris waist, on went a corset — the peak of sixteen's desires. The braided, long, heavy red hair went up in a preposterous hair-do — combed straight up in the back, then rolled to meet a wobbling pompadour. It was simply hideous and I adored it! I simpered at myself in the mirror and preened myself on being the "dernier cri" in "fin de siècle" fashion.

And skirts down meant new summer dresses, because last summer's could not be let down and anyway they were not suitable for the delightful new young lady status. How pretty those dresses were! I can see them now on their padded, scented hangers as the very new young lady gloated over them.

I remember the summer of 1898 as the golden summer: "summer gilds the skies." Thunder-storms are brief and soon forgotten as lovely day succeeds lovely day. We were so gay, so innocent, so unaware of hazards or dangers, so secure and safe, so sure life would always be as happy for us as it then was. It was, of course, the last summer, as a nation, we were to be free of "entangling alliances," the last summer when we could still believe, because the sun shone on us, all was well with the world.

But we knew nothing of what lay ahead of us; as for the larger world outside our narrow limits, we scarcely knew it existed except as something in books; we had never heard of social consciousness; we lived for the day. Enough to be alive, to be young, to be sixteen-going-on-seventeen.

That summer of 1898 brought to an end the lovely summers of my girlhood. Never again one so carefree, never again one so golden.

We played our parts, that summer, against a background of martial music, of the rumble of distant drums, so far away they were like a sound heard off-stage in a drama in which we were both actors and audience.

Over the park entrance near the railway station, called "dee-po," where the boys entrained for camp, hung a huge ban-

ner: "*Dulce et decorum pro patri mori*," it read. A noble truth. But many a boy died that summer of dysentery in camps filthy from neglect and ignorance and scandalous misuse of funds. There was not much *dulce* and *decorum* about those deaths.

It is difficult now to realize the mood of that summer, when war still seemed a gallant adventure — not just to a silly girl, but to everyone. We flocked to the "dee-po" to see the boys leave as to a gay picnic; we kissed and were kissed quite indiscriminately and no mother could scold, for had not maidens from Homer on bade the hero going to war a loving farewell! And we wrote silly, sentimental letters to as many boys as possible; we coaxed them to send us buttons from their uniforms and we made bracelets of them. That girl who had the most jangling bracelets — heavy, ugly, button bracelets — was looked upon with envy and disfavor. I proudly wore four, two on each scrawny wrist. The brass turned my skin green but, except in my bath or asleep, I wore those bracelets as a badge of honor.

Even when one of those boys came home in a flag-covered coffin, dead of dysentery at Camp Chicamauga, and we went to his military funeral in the Disciple Church down on High Street, the mood of not unpleasant melancholy prevailed. We wept when Taps sounded, we were briefly sad as we might

In Other Days

have been at a very moving play. Reality did not yet intrude to tear apart illusion or destroy the dream.

Picnics, canoeing, trolley parties, dancing at Silver Lake, porches full of chattering boys and girls, mandolins and guitars, voices dying away in the distance — these made up our golden summer. Fun and laughter, mild love affairs, silly little escapades — these were the substance of our days.

Lydia and I owned a canoe which we kept in a boat livery at the foot of Exchange Street. Lydia's family had a cottage at Long Lake, about ten miles, I'd guess, from town. I know Lydia's father used to drive his "high-steppin' trotters" out in an hour and a half, but Lydia and I liked to go back and forth by canoe. From the boat livery by way of the canal, to and through Summit Lake was an easy paddle, and then there was a short carry and we were at the north end of Long Lake, not far from the cottage.

One sultry, brooding July day we set out from town, loaded with sugar and other supplies for the household. That was the summer when colored stockings were the fad in the young set, cotton or lisle of course. No one ever had more than one pair of fine, black silk hose, for very best. Mine were kept wrapped in tissue paper until they almost fell apart from disuse. I had one gorgeous plaid pair — green, yellow and red;

Lydia had the same plaid in blue, red and white. This day I was wearing a purple pair, and oh! how purple they were!

The sky was ugly when we left town and I was scared, but we reached the boat-house at Summit Lake safely and stopped there for a soda. It was so lowering when we came out of the boat-house that I begged Lydia to wait out the storm. But she, fearing neither Hell nor high water, and already irritated at me for my irrational and silly fear, decided we could beat the storm.

Within a few rods of shore, a terrific flash of lightning streaked down into the lake just beyond us, with a crack of thunder that nearly shattered my ear drums. I jumped, upset the canoe, spilled Lydia, supplies, sugar, me and my purple socks into the shallow water. We waded ashore, Lydia cross and sputtering at my awkwardness. In the boat-house we peeled off our wet and by now sticky clothes, and got into some old duds kept in our lockers for emergencies. I stripped off my stockings last, took one look and began to laugh. Lydia looked, stopped sputtering, and joined me in laughter. There we were — damp, miserable, supplies lost, a long way from home and a good scolding waiting us — helpless with laughter over a pair of thin, deeply-dyed, Easter Egg purple legs. They stayed purple all summer. No scrubbing, no soap, no bleach removed that

In Other Days

noble color. All that summer I was to be "the girl with the purple legs."

Open trolley cars superceded the closed car on our streets when summer came, and with them came trolley parties. Your host rented a trolley car complete with motorman for an hour or two of a summer evening. Guests gathered at a designated corner, clambered aboard and toured the town, all tracks cleared. They were noisy, hilarious parties, for everyone wanted to crowd up front near the motorman, to beg him for a chance to steer the thing, or to take turns clanging the bell. Constant clanging and shouting announced a trolley party to the wayfarer. Sometimes an especially affluent host engaged the outfit for a whole evening and we went all the way to Barberton, some six miles away. There we had supper at the Inn and danced later. The Barberton Inn had just been built by Ohio Barber for the entertainment of visiting officers of the new Barber Match Works. It was shiny, over-stuffed, opulent in the best golden oak style. We thought the food "elegant," the ballroom floor "superb," and ourselves utterly sophisticated, though our phrase was *fin de siècle*.

If we didn't go to Barberton we rode the whole trolley system in town and ended up at the home of our host for supper. No punch and cooky stuff, but turkey and baked ham and

and the day after the 15th of June, I received a letter from the
 same person, saying that he had been thinking of me very much.

"You have been thinking of me very much," he said.

"I have been thinking of you very much," he said, "and I have been
 thinking of you very much, and I have been thinking of you very much."

"I have been thinking of you very much," he said, "and I have been
 thinking of you very much, and I have been thinking of you very much."

"I have been thinking of you very much," he said, "and I have been
 thinking of you very much, and I have been thinking of you very much."

"I have been thinking of you very much," he said, "and I have been
 thinking of you very much, and I have been thinking of you very much."

"I have been thinking of you very much," he said, "and I have been
 thinking of you very much, and I have been thinking of you very much."

"I have been thinking of you very much," he said, "and I have been
 thinking of you very much, and I have been thinking of you very much."

"I have been thinking of you very much," he said, "and I have been
 thinking of you very much, and I have been thinking of you very much."

"I have been thinking of you very much," he said, "and I have been
 thinking of you very much, and I have been thinking of you very much."

"I have been thinking of you very much," he said, "and I have been
 thinking of you very much, and I have been thinking of you very much."

"I have been thinking of you very much," he said, "and I have been
 thinking of you very much, and I have been thinking of you very much."

"I have been thinking of you very much," he said, "and I have been
 thinking of you very much, and I have been thinking of you very much."

home-made bread and ice cream. When I think of a trolley party I think of peach ice cream, home-made of course. No woman worth her salt would have served store ice cream. The delicious stuff was made in an old-fashioned, hand-turned freezer — everyone in the family taking his turn at the handle until the mound of luscious ice cream, smelling and tasting of peaches ripening in the sun, was ready to serve.

Feasting ended, we filled the porches and sang to tinkling mandolins and guitars, or perhaps the girls took turns playing the piano just inside an open door, and we danced. When a parent appeared at the door it was time to sing "Good-night, Ladies, we're going to leave you now." And for the walk home, so slowly, through the maple-lined, moonlit streets with a boy we liked and hoped liked us.

Perhaps the oddest performance of this golden summer was our one Tally-Ho party. The Tally-Ho was a strange contraption — a "four-in-hand pleasure coach." It was high, cumbersome, ugly. You climbed up to its quite uncomfortable seats by a little ladder — a precarious ascent. Four horses were needed to pull it and it was an art to drive them. Mr. Burnside, a very rich and very sporting gentleman, owned the only one in our town. He loved taking his family and such friends as dared not refuse on what he called "expeditions." Mr. B. was

In Other Days

usually pleasantly high, and his idea of a good "expedition" was to urge the horses to a near gallop and then, whip poised at the ready, to careen through the Akron streets. His women guests, enveloped in linen dusters, their big hats held on by long veils tied in floppy bows under the chin, clung to their perches as best they could, clutching one another when things got too bad, and praying for a safe return. The time came when neither family nor friends would ride with him and he sold the outfit to a local livery. I'm afraid the new owner lost money, because few young people could afford its rental and older people fought shy of the bone-racking equipage.

But once that summer, Bess, whose mother liked being "fustest with the mostest," gave a Tally-Ho party. We must have looked absurd, our long skirts catching about our ankles as we skittishly clambered up the ladder to our seats. It took hours to reach the Carpenters' summer place at Turkeyfoot Lake and we arrived with every bone aching. But that was a small price to pay, once, for our delightful feeling of superiority as we looked down from our perches on the poor souls who would never have the privilege we were enjoying. Horrid little snobs!

I suppose that picnic was like all the other picnics at the Carpenters' — tennis and croquet and swimming for the active

ones, lolling in the hammock for me. I couldn't lob a ball across the net — as a matter of fact, I couldn't even see the ball; I detested croquet — all those wickets to trip over; and I couldn't swim a stroke. I did like canoeing provided some one else paddled, preferably male and young. Then I could lazily trail my fingers in the water, holding them up to watch the drops glisten in the sun. Or I could urge the deluded boy to paddle across the lake after water-lilies — hard to pull, slimy when torn loose, wet and nasty in the canoe, but valuable as trophies of devotion.

I suppose the day ended with supper and a fire on the beach and singing — for so our picnics always ended. "Good-bye Dolly Grey, we're going to leave you now," or the tiresome song my red head provoked at least once an evening: "Casey would waltz with the strawberry blonde" — how I grew to hate that tune! I suppose we jolted home in the Tally-Ho at the frightfully late hour of midnight; I suppose my mother was on the front porch waiting to snatch me from some impending doom; but it's all gone — just a faint memory of an aching back and of staying in bed late the next morning.

All the gayest memories of that summer gather around Silver Lake. Moonlight and the sound of lapping water, music and dancing feet, pretty girls and pretty dresses, handsome boys

In Other Days

in white flannels and blue blazers. Monday evenings at Silver Lake — all summer long Monday evening saw us once again on the open trolley, bound for the lake five mile away, but a half-hour trip. Each mother had pledged each daughter not to miss the eleven o'clock trolley, for there wasn't another until one!

The pavilion was a two-story building built far out over the lake; the dance hall was on the upper level so that as we strolled the promenade between dances we could image ourselves on ship-board. Sometimes we leaned on the wide rail and watched the moon make a path across the water and half wished we might follow it. Sometimes we did follow that moon path in a canoe, feeling delightfully romantic as the dance music came to us faintly from a distance. But mostly we danced! We two-stepped to *Stars and Stripes Forever* and other Sousa marches; we waltzed to *Tales from the Vienna Wood* and, of course, to the *Blue Danube*. We even waltzed to a sentimental song which ran

We shall meet but we shall miss him,
There will be one vacant chair
As we linger to caress him
While we breathe our evening prayer.

We sang as we danced and thought sweetly of the boys fighting so bravely for us in Cuba, though what it was all about we knew no more than anyone else, and our hearts were only faint-

The Golden Summer

ly touched; those hearts were as light as our dancing feet, and our thoughts were with the boys we were dancing with, not with the boys away.

We are caught forever in my memory — like the figures on the Grecian urn — so young, so untroubled, so innocently gay in our pretty frocks. I remember that Lydia and I had dresses alike, except that hers was blue and white, mine lavender and white. They were made of organdy with round boat-necks and little puffed sleeves finished by narrow ruchings of white organdy, and the full, long skirts had row after row of the same ruching. Wide sashes held in small waists and our hats were white leghorn — mine with a purple bow, Lydia's with blue. And the skirts flared wide as we swung and dipped in three-quarter time or tore across the floor in a noisy two-step.

Water lapping, dance music, laughter, a stolen kiss, a wild rush for the trolley, the walk to the corner home . . . Mama waiting . . . dreams . . .

"Summer, summer, summer — golden days, never to come again, never to be lost."

Sheila's Story

It all happened a long time ago, in the horse-and-buggy days, so long ago that the woman who writes the story was barely seventeen. It took place in Akron, not the ugly "rubber center of the world" it is now, but a pleasant, friendly county-seat boasting a small college and one, also small, industry named for its founder, B. F. Goodrich.

South Akron at the turn of the century was almost entirely Irish; most of them worked in the Goodrich shop nearby. They were, I suppose, "shanty Irish," but I have only amusing and tender memories of them. The old ones retained their Irishness, their brogue, and there is no sweeter speech than Dublin Irish, their blarney — "Och, the darlin' gurrll, she's the livin' image of you, Doctor dear." They were endless story tellers, "Sure now don't be tellin' me ye niver heard," and there would follow some marvelous tale of the ancient kings of Ireland — from whom most of them claimed descent — or a story about leprechauns and the little folk, in whom they quite believed.

They gave to the events of their lives, poor as they were, a kind of ritual splendor. There was nothing like a South Akron wedding or a wake. That vigil for the dead, ancient as time itself — the old women sitting along the kitchen wall, aprons over their heads, keening, that strange eerie wail for the dead that went on hour after hour while the men folk watched or “waked” in the best room “befriending the cor’ ” and drinking Irish whiskey.

Many of these people were patients of my father. Scot though he was and a Protestant heretic to boot, he was much beloved in Shantytown. I could dredge from memory a book of tales grave and gay of those South Akron Irish of long ago. But one episode remains almost as vivid as when it happened, partly I suppose because at the time I seemed to myself a young Florence Nightingale, and partly because in retrospect I see how it set the pattern for my continuing reverence and awe for the great mystery of birth.

That winter was a pleasant, mild one with little snow till after the New Year. I was driving for my father a good deal, for his lameness had been rather worse than usual and driving tired him, even though he had a special phaeton with a lowered step made by the Studebaker Company. It rested him to have me drive and gave us more time together which we both cherished.

The afternoon of the day before Christmas as we were

In Other Days

finishing the rounds my father said, "Drive out to South Akron. I'll take a look at Mrs. McConnel and we can give her her Christmas present." She was a salty old girl, her legs badly crippled with rheumatism but amazingly deft with her hands. She made beautiful hooked rugs from her own designs and I half-suspected one was in the making for me, since she had asked me to bring her old cast-off woolens some weeks earlier. There was nothing much to do for her, but she loved a "crack" with Doc, and she was fond of me because I was Doc's. She worried about me a good deal, too — past seventeen, marriageable, I ought to be settling down to "rale livin'." "That red hair'll make trouble for you yet, Doc," she'd say, "best marry her off soon."

She was full of old saws and ancient tales, more than a little ribald, though she softened her yarns for my ears. I loved her and was happy to turn off South Main onto the crisscross of little streets beyond Exchange. We found her sitting in her old black rocker before the kitchen stove, skirt turned back over her stout gray flannel petticoat, clay-pipe in her mouth. We wished her a Merry Christmas and gave her the present, a big bag of shag tobacco. "You niver forget, Doctor dear," she said, "all the saints presarve and bless you." Then I was sent to fetch the cookie jar full of great disks of sugar cookies redolent of

...and that was the first time I had ever been so happy. I had been so sad and lonely for so long, and now I was so happy. I had found a friend, a friend who understood me, a friend who loved me. I had found a home, a home where I belonged. I had found a life, a life that was worth living. I had found a love, a love that was true and lasting. I had found a family, a family that was mine. I had found a future, a future that was bright and hopeful. I had found a peace, a peace that was sweet and comforting. I had found a joy, a joy that was pure and perfect. I had found a happiness, a happiness that was endless and eternal. I had found a life, a life that was truly mine.

...and that was the first time I had ever been so happy. I had been so sad and lonely for so long, and now I was so happy. I had found a friend, a friend who understood me, a friend who loved me. I had found a home, a home where I belonged. I had found a life, a life that was worth living. I had found a love, a love that was true and lasting. I had found a family, a family that was mine. I had found a future, a future that was bright and hopeful. I had found a peace, a peace that was sweet and comforting. I had found a joy, a joy that was pure and perfect. I had found a happiness, a happiness that was endless and eternal. I had found a life, a life that was truly mine.

anise and caraway and nutmeg. The pot of tay was taken from the back of the stove, tay — black, hot and strong as lye. After we had heard all the news of children and grands, “all doin’ well, the saints be praised,” and I’d told her I was going away to college in the fall, she had scolded my father for sending a “marriageable gurrll to some silly school calls itself a college, to fill her empty head with silly notions when she ought to be marryin’ and havin’ babies . . .” She broke off, then added, “and babies reminds me you best step next door and look in on young Sheila Flynn. She’s alone and him workin’, no doctor, no money and nearin’ her time. Jimmy works hard, but you know how it is.” And indeed we did, for all these people lived on the margin line of destitution and Doc spent more on them than he ever received — but that was not for anyone to know. He had brought Sheila into the world, she was just my age, we had gone to her wedding a year ago, she was Doc’s to look after. So my father went across the tiny yard while I sat on the footstool, resting against the soft petticoat of our old lady, munching cookies, basking in the warmth and love around me and dreaming idly that it would be wonderful if you were going to have a baby, to have it at Christmas time.

The dreaming was broken — my father called, “Ruth, come here.” I jumped up and ran across to the cold one-room

In Other Days

shack where Sheila lived. I'd seen a good deal of life in South Akron, but never anything so forlorn as this. A table, a decrepit stove, a chair or two, a bare floor, an old bed on which Sheila lay tossing and moaning. It was plain even to my ignorance that she was not nearing her time, but that she was there. My father said, "Drive home. Get the black bag, sheets, all the old cotton. (We kept a drawer full of such things for the many emergencies forever cropping up. My mother complained that she never knew how many sheets she had.) And get back here fast!"

There was no one in the neighborhood to call, save for our old lady; all the men and women worked in the shop, as did the half grown children.

As I drove home I turned over in my mind the lies I'd need to tell my mother. The truth would have shocked her beyond bearing. Indeed she was capable of preventing my return, and that could not be. But the lies were never told, for happily she was away, and our good Kitty, Irish herself, would never give me away. When my mother died at eighty-eight she had never heard of this episode; she would still have been horrified.

Kitty helped me get things together and I was on my way back at a pace which must have startled quiet old Lady Grey, used as she was to a doctor's jog-trot.

When I arrived my father had the stove going, water heating; he had gone next door for a clothes basket and clean rags and an old nightgown. As I came in he said, looking me very straight in the eye, "Girl, this may be bad and you'll have to help. There's no one else. Do you think you can keep from fainting?" For I had the habit of keeling over at the sight of blood. "No," I said, "I won't faint." "See that you don't." With no more said we got to work.

There were no sheets on the bed, only the worn mattress ticking. So first I got a clean sheet under Sheila, the clean nightgown on, and her face sponged. Then I said, "Papa, I'll have to get out of my dress. I can't work this way." (I know the dress doesn't really belong in this story, but it was such a pretty dress and I loved it so much that I can't leave it out. The long tight sleeves did make it difficult to work in, but I fancy fear of spoiling it really animated my wish to get it off. It was my first long skirt, my first suit, copper-brown wool, a bell skirt, tight from hip to knee, then flaring to my ankles, jacket military in cut with yards of black soutache braid adorning my somewhat flat young front.) So I took it off and in brown taffeta petticoat and white embroidered corset cover I was ready, and it was high time, for birth was upon us.

Sheila was undernourished and frail but she had resilient

In Other Days

young bones and muscles, she loved Doc and obeyed him like a docile child. My arms grew tired and sore as she pulled on them and tried to stifle her cries. My father said, "Don't waste your strength, Sheila. Help, don't hinder." And she did help. I was too excited to think, but not too excited to be aware of what a tremendous event was taking place. When the baby arrived my father practically threw him at me as he did the necessary things for Sheila, giving me orders at the same time. I'd never even seen a new baby; I was too scared to do anything but obey those orders. I did get that squirming creature clean, dipes on, flannel band pinned, flannel shirt on, all from the emergency kit. Then I laid him on the soft old blanket on the rags in the borrowed clothes basket by the stove. I looked down at him and thought how wonderful it was that he was there and that I had helped to bring him, flooded for the moment with a triumphant well-being.

Just as I turned to ask what to do next we heard Sheila's mother and husband at the door. Still without my dress I grabbed hastily for it, but I need not have bothered. No one had eyes for me; only one thing in that room was worth looking at, the face of Sheila transfigured with joy and love.

Outside, the neighbors home from work were gathering to hear the news. Their voices made a murmured chorus as we

finished our work and my father told Sheila's mother what he wanted her to do. I scrambled into my dress as best I could and we stepped out into the frosty air of the day-before-Christmas just fading into Christmas Eve. Everyone crowded close, full of questions. "Is it a boy now, Doc?" "Sure' tis. Doc always brings boys." "Another Will, then, it'll be." My father's name was Will and there were any number of Patrick Williams and Xavier Williams and Michael Williams in South Akron. Such a child with a good saint's name and Doc's name for a bonus was doubly protected. "A big foine boy ye say," and, "Never tell me Doc's gurril was helpin'," and "Good as a nurse, she is." So talking every second, they moved along with us all happy because "Sheila had a foine boy, the Saints be praised." For nowhere were babies more welcome and more truly loved. They were from God's hand, everyone knew that, and you took in love what God had sent in love and rejoiced.

Some of them left us as we went into Mrs. McConnel's, some followed us in to tell her the story, to tell it over and over, Doc's gurril coming in for an amount of blarney calculated to turn her head permanently. I combed my hair and washed my face at the kitchen sink, and as I turned away to make room for my father, he said as though I really was a nurse, "Well, Miss Murdoch, we make a good a good team." "Yes, Dr. Mur-

In Other Days

doch, we do," I answered and we laughed together over a job well done.

We drank a cup of that hot black tay, and said Goodnight while "the Saints be praised" and "Merry Christmas" followed us as we went back for a last look at Sheila.

We went in quietly. There lay Sheila, the child on her arm, her young husband kneeling by the bed, his arm thrown protectingly across his treasure. For a moment, young and ignorant as I was, I sensed the meaning of Christmas. Here it was in this poor room, as once it had been in a stable, as it always was when life was given — the great creative moment when that which had had no being now was, through love. No wonder the Magi knelt in adoration and awe before the Mother and the Divine Child; no wonder the heavens rang with the angels' song; no wonder the church called Mary, Queen of Heaven, Stella Maris, Rosa Mundi. Here it was, the mystery, the awesome beauty and mystery of birth, the awesome beauty and mystery of Christmas.

We stepped quietly out. We were not needed there. As we walked away my father said between laughter and a tear, "The Saints be praised. Merry Christmas, darlin'." And we went home.

Christmas Long Ago

As I remember, the Twelve Days of Christmas are always cold, there is always snow, great piles of it dazzling white and clean, sleigh bells jingle as the young men race their swift cutters down the wide, snowy streets; pretty girls, bundled to the eyes in warm furs, wave at the small girl watching them, nose glued to window-pane, as they dash by. She wishes she was a big girl with a beau and a sleek cutter and a fast horse. Then she gets out her sled, the latest thing in stream-lined coasters, and with mittens on a cord around her neck, stocking-cap over her ears, black leggings buttoned to her knees, flings herself on the sled and goes "belly slamming" down steep Mill Street. The snow has made the rough cobblestones sleek and smooth for coasting but treacherous for the horses who must be sharp shod before they leave the stable. No traffic jams ever tied up a city, no matter how big the storm in those halcyon days. You merely

In Other Days

put "up" the buggy, got "down" the sleigh and had the horses sharp shod, and there you were! No green Christmases disturb this picture of Christmas past; only snow, ice, sleighs, sleds, bells ringing, fires glowing, hot chocolate waiting when you came in from play.

Sometimes Christmas is at home in Akron; sometimes at Uncle Hugh's in Warren. Which is better, I cannot say, for both were truly "merry." At home there was all the before-Christmas fun of making the decorations for the tree and of driving out to Tallmadge with my father to get the tree. Our tree ornaments were home-made; for days before, we strung the biggest, firmest cranberries on shoe thread and made long festoons of popcorn, and gilded walnut shell halves, and made cornucopias of colored paper which were filled with "hundreds and thousands" — tiny, hard, vari-colored sugar candies. There were no electric lights in our house, only gas, so that honest-to-goodness candles adorned our tree, all in small tin holders clamped to the boughs. There was one bought ornament, a small china angel for the topmost bough.

Christmas-at-home began on Christmas Eve when the neighborhood children came for supper and exchange of small gifts and the tree lighting. My father used to light the candles with a long-handled lighter like those used to light the altar

candles in church. It always seemed a fairy wand to me, as one by one the candles flamed in the darkened room and the tree bloomed as though a thousand buds had burst into flower. After a simple supper of johnnycake, perhaps, and a big tureen of my mother's famous oyster bisque, my father read the Bob Cratchet scene from the *Christmas Carol*. Then the children left and I went to bed, but only for a little while. For the oddest feature of this by-gone Christmas Eve for a child who came from the strictest Scotch Presbyterian background, with its deep dislike of all things Catholic, was that I always went with our good Catholic neighbors, the McCues and their brood of children, to midnight Mass at St. Bernard's.

I am grateful for the sweet memory of those Christmas Eves, going down the snowy street with the McCues, my hand tucked into "Mama" McCue's warm one; of coming into the big church from the cold outside, to candle-light and incense and soft music, and O! best of all, the crèche with the baby Jesus and His mother. Whatever religion entered into my benighted little soul, came then. After the solemnity and beauty of the Mass, release came in our noisy shouts as we ran home, pelting each other with soft snow and trying to be the first to shout "Merry Christmas." And then, almost before I had time to fall asleep, it was morning and I was running downstairs to

In Other Days

the glowing fireplace and the stocking hung so hopefully the night before.

Always at our house on Christmas Day there was company, as on other days, too; always there was set an extra place for the unexpected guest and always it was filled. Sometimes a motley assortment sat down to our Christmas feast, for no matter how carefully my mother planned for just the right, congenial group, no one ever knew who might appear at the last minute, "dragged in by your father," my mother would say. For my father knew and loved more derelicts, down and outers, near down and outers, than anyone I ever knew. As he had absolutely no sense of caste, of rich or poor, of color or creed, Christmas might find some poor devil my father was helping to recover from a protracted binge sitting next the quite elegant and very socially-conscious wife of the President of Buchtel College. I remember the long, lank, severe Professor of Greek playing happily on the floor with a small black boy and a toy train all one snowy afternoon. People came and went all day from our house on Christmas; some of the first lot staying until evening, new ones coming, and all of us finally gathering in the old-fashioned kitchen where everything was ready on the big, scrubbed white-pine table for us to make our own supper — tender turkey and ham sandwiches, pitchers of milk, pots of

Christmas Long Ago

coffee and all the other things to bring the day of feasting and merriment to a close. Best of all, I was allowed to stay up until the very end of the party!

Sometimes we went to Uncle Hugh's in Warren, for Warren was midway between our home and that of Aunt Bess in Oil City, and so it was a convenient place for the assembling of the Clan Murdoch. Christmastime becomes a happy blur of getting ready to go to Uncle Hugh's, of the exciting trip and the joyous arrival. It is snowing on this far away Christmas. It is cold and clear and beautiful. It snows and snows. We begin to plan; we speculate about the weather, we try to decide whether to go on the twenty-third or the twenty-fourth, knowing well that because my father is a doctor, his going will depend on two things — whether any of his old patients decide to die, or any of the young ones to produce a baby. My mother departs several days before Christmas, laden with packages. My Aunt Bess will leave Oil City about the same time, similarly laden. The two will converge upon Warren where they and Aunt Lucy will make ready for the family ingathering — fourteen of us to be tucked away in a small house and six ravening youngsters to be fed.

After my mother's departure, my father and I try to remember all the things she left for us to do and to get them

In Other Days

done in the way she expected us to do them. The Scots maid, Jean, not over from Scotland very long, is on the whole disapproving of America, American ways, and us — especially of all this Christmas foolishness. For in old Scotch Presbyterian tradition, celebrating Christmas is definitely Romish or Popish. My father and I are familiar with this point of view because it is my grandfather's. In his house only unusually long prayers distinguished Christmas from other days. New Year's is celebrated as being safely Protestant, I suppose. So Jean tends to slam the kettles and pans and mutters about "folk who go stravinging aroun" and "canna be content to bide in their ain hame." Now and then she mutters forbiddingly, "You and your faither!" But she helps me make the taffy and the popcorn balls and the maple sugar candy thick with black walnuts, and without being asked she bakes a huge hickory-nut cake, my father's favorite. My father and I pinch and poke knowingly all the turkeys in the Central Market, for we are to take one as part of our share of the feast.

The day before Christmas comes at last. Every time the telephones ring I am in a panic. But glory be, no summons for "Doc" comes, and in the late afternoon of December twenty-fourth we set out for the Erie station — only a stone's throw from our house, but, loaded as we are with bags, cake and

Christmas Long Ago

turkey, the way seems endless. The train is late — Erie trains always are — and packed. We stand holding our gear until someone sees that my father is lame and gives him a seat. I cling haphazardly to the arm; the turkey and the cake are hoisted, right-side-up, to the baggage rack. The coach is hot, and smells of damp clothing, humans, food — for everyone is going-home-for-Christmas and carrying at least two baskets. But no one minds. Happiness is almost tasteable and touchable in that old Erie train on Christmas Eve so long ago. After a little, a child, too excited to keep still, pipes up with “Hark, the Herald Angels.” Its mother says “Hush,” but other voices join the child’s. My father’s sweet untrained tenor rises high and pure, and I who cannot carry a tune, sing lustily. If it is the heart’s singing that counts, I am the best singer in that coach. The old conductor with his massive paunch, the Masonic emblems dangling from the watch-chain taut across it, joins in with a rumbling bass as he pushes his way through the crowd.

Then the battered old Erie station in Warren. Lots of snow, much more than in Akron, we say. Kenneth, Jessie, Uncle Hugh meet us. The two brothers so alike, my father a frailer edition of his brother, exchange a laconic “Well, Hugh,” “Well, Will,” while I hug everyone in sight. We sort out the packages. Kenneth refuses to carry the turkey. Uncle Hugh

In Other Days

hoists it to his shoulder and we set out. The light in the shops shining out on the softly falling snow, the streets full of last-minute shoppers, the songs of carolers, the good Christmas smell from the piles of trees still unsold on the curb, and Kenneth, the big cousin whom I adore, holding my small hand. Heaven could never be better than this, and this is only Christmas Eve!

Then we are at Uncle Hugh's. Every window blazes with candles, a huge wreath with a great red bow hangs on the door flung open for us. And there are Aunt Bess and Aunt Lucy and my mother, arms open, hearts warm, love in their voices as they gather us in.

And Christmas Day itself? A haze of light, warmth, food, sleepiness, laughter, music, happiness and love. On Christmas Eve we were sent to bed early, three little girls to a bed! Christmas morning is a jumble of cinnamon rolls for breakfast, of hurrying into our coats to go to church with Aunt Lucy, of racing home to open our gifts. Then a long table extending from the dining room almost across the living room, the white damask cloth touching the floor, at either end a turkey; behind one Uncle Hugh, behind the other my father, waiting with sharpened knives until Nan, the youngest cousin, says Grace. Mashed potatoes like cloud poems, small creamed onions, as smooth and white as giant pearls, candied sweet potatoes done

Christmas Long Ago

in maple-sugar, cranberries embedded like rubies, jellies, pickled peaches, biscuits, Grandmother's butter, pitchers of Jersey cream so thick you lifted it out with a spoon, mince pie, apple pie, plum pudding, brought in by Aunt Lucy with brandy burning in a blue flame, a feast of the Gargantuan proportions of those in Dickens' stories. And later, my father read aloud the beloved tale of Bob Cratchet and Tiny Tim and we echoed, "God bless us every one." Then we gather round the old square piano; Jessie plays and my aunts and uncles and my father sing Christmas carols, but more often the old Scots songs they know so well. The Scots tongue is sweet to hear and one youngster cries a little because everything is so beautiful and she is so happy, and then — and then it all fades out. A small girl is asleep under the old piano.

A Dream

It was Christmas time, I thought, but the doors and windows were open wide, a warm summer sun shone, and in the garden, phlox and nasturtiums bloomed side by side with tulips and daffodils. Martha and I were making Christmas cookies; *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing* was coming from the radio and the pungent smell of pine boughs mingled with the fragrance of caraway seed and cinnamon. I was wearing an odd dress for work in the kitchen — pale grey, very pretty with silver embroidery and soft full sleeves; I had on high-heeled grey pumps — though I knew it had been years since I had worn either pumps or high heels. Over the dress I wore a most extraordinary garment — a pink cover-all with bright red roses and bright red buttons. Not at all the colors for a red-haired woman!

I took a batch of cookies from the oven and Martha said, "Guess we pretty near done for today. Better we think about

dinnah now. Mister will be coming soon and calling for he suppah." The song on the radio ceased, followed by the unctuous voice of the announcer saying something about "shopping days before Christmas." I turned off the radio and answered Martha. "Yes, these will be enough. Don't they look nice?" "Sure do," said Martha.

And all this time, while Christmas preparations were going on so naturally, the warm sun shone in the kitchen windows and the breeze coming in was soft and mild and full of summer fragrance. I was conscious of an odd confusion — not unpleasant, but a feeling that I had moved a little way from my everyday life without quite knowing how. Somehow the mingling of seasons seemed natural, strange but right, as though it might be the setting for something that didn't belong within the ordinary boundaries of space and time. The confusion I felt — if it was confusion — was pleasant, even mildly exhilarating.

I took off my gaudy cover-all and walked toward the hook behind the cellar doorway where I meant to hang it. But halfway there I stopped; I thought I heard something. Yet the sound, if it were sound, seemed far away, remote, only half heard. Just then Martha said, "Listen, Miss Kate, I hear singin'." "Perhaps I didn't turn the radio clear off." "No, there's

In Other Days

no song coming over no radio . . . This something else, this something . . .” And then I heard the song, and I heard along with it the sound of movement, that unmistakable sound of many feet moving together in marching rhythm.

The sound was coming fully now through the kitchen door. I dropped my apron, ran through the door onto the back porch. Our porch looks out upon a wide open space, once used by the girls athletic association of our college, which stretches a long way eastward toward the distant college buildings. Just coming into sight at the far end, as I reached the porch, were boys — many boys — all in a dear and familiar drab-green uniform. They were singing as they came. I could catch the words now — “If the Army and the Navy ever look on Heaven’s scenes” — clearer, louder, nearer.

I raced down the steps, swift as the girl I had long ceased to be; I ran toward them arms wide. The song ended “United States Marines!” Ranks broke. Mart caught me first and then Dan’s arms were around me. There was Jerry, head back, laughing, calling out “Hey, where’s the cookies?” But I knew Jerry was lying on Okinawa. Just behind him came Jack — two hundred pounds of mound dynamite the college paper called him when he pitched a no-hit game for the V-12 team. But — but Jack was at Leyte. “I’ll be damned, I thought my skull was

the first settlement of the colony of Virginia, from the first landing of the English in 1607, to the death of the first governor, Sir Thomas Dale, in 1611.

The first settlement was made in 1607, by a company of Englishmen, who were sent out by the Virginia Company, to establish a colony in Virginia.

The first landing was made on the 20th of May, 1607, at Jamestown, on the James River. The first governor, Sir Thomas Dale, arrived in 1611, and died in 1612. The first settlement was made in 1607, by a company of Englishmen, who were sent out by the Virginia Company, to establish a colony in Virginia.

The first settlement was made in 1607, by a company of Englishmen, who were sent out by the Virginia Company, to establish a colony in Virginia.

The first settlement was made in 1607, by a company of Englishmen, who were sent out by the Virginia Company, to establish a colony in Virginia. The first landing was made on the 20th of May, 1607, at Jamestown, on the James River. The first governor, Sir Thomas Dale, arrived in 1611, and died in 1612. The first settlement was made in 1607, by a company of Englishmen, who were sent out by the Virginia Company, to establish a colony in Virginia.

hard enough to take this," he'd said when the shrapnel bit in. Yet here he was, the fine head unmarred, the black curls he hated clustered as tight as ever. Then Dick was reaching for me, but both Dick's legs had been shot from under him at Saipan, and he had died as they lifted him onto the stretcher. He was saying, "I told you I'd be back. I told you I wouldn't flunk out. Here I am — bring on the baked beans."

Laughing and crying I went from one to another — all the boys I had tried to teach a little, whom I had laughed at, and wept over, and loved — all back, all well, all happy, all calling, "We said we'd be back. We told you you'd never get rid of us. Don't have to get a pass from the sergeant to come to supper, now. Bring on the ham. How's the coffee? The Boss got any of that old 3.2 beer he used to give us . . . ? Got any . . . ?" And so we came crowding into the kitchen — the small kitchen of a small house, but there was room for everyone. Martha, between tears and laughter, was saying, "Bless God, Bless God, where at my coffee pot? Where at the big carving knife? Mr. Jack, you just keep your fingers out them beans." And there on the table was a noble ham, and grandmother's old beanpot, full, and potato salad and bread and cookies and pies — all where a moment ago there had been nothing but a neat pile of Christmas cookies!

In Other Days

The boys were getting plates, filling them, crowding into the dining room and the living room, calling back, "Hey, look at it. She's got a tree for us. 'Member the time she said any time we came back would be Christmas for her?" They sat on chairs, on cushions, on the floor; they spilled onto the porches, into the yard; they filled the air with their clamor, they joked and laughed and sang. But no one going by the house looked up, no one seemed to see them or hear them. I wanted to call out "Do come in — here are my boys back safe and well." But I didn't; I was content just to sit and look at them and love them.

Finally the last plate was emptied, the last cup drained. It was quiet now. They came in from the porch, they got up from the chairs, the floor; then they began to move all together, still so quietly, toward the kitchen. I followed, and as I began to go down the steps someone said, "Better stay here, Ma — you can't go with us, this time — be seein'ya."

Once more the sound of many feet marking time on hard ground and then the echo — "From the shores of Tripoli" — fading, fading away in the distance, and then silence, emptiness.

I came back into the house; Martha was setting the table. I went into the living room to pick up the plates and cups. There were none. The room was empty, tidy, undisturbed. I

looked again; there was no tree, no packages. There was no least sign that anyone had been there. The sun of a late summer afternoon shone hot through the western window. I stood there a moment. "Have I gone mad . . . have I been dreaming awake?" I sat down a little breathless, a little frightened, in the big chair by the window where Jack had sat. As I straightened the cushion I felt something hard that had slipped down behind it. I picked it up. There it was — a bronze pin, the old familiar insignia, the globe pierced by the anchor — just as it had fallen from someone's cap. I pinned it on my dress and went blindly through tears upstairs.

Property of
Daughters of the American Revolution
Florida State Library





